

# 10<sup>th</sup> EDITION Africa Visa Openness Report 2025



VISA OPENNESS INDEX



AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK GROUP

# The AVOI at 10: measuring

## 2016

**The first of ten Africa Visa Openness Reports** to measure how open African countries are when it comes to visas by looking at what they ask of citizens from other countries in Africa when they travel. It aims to show at a glance which countries are facilitating travel for citizens of other countries and how.



## 2018

Launch of the **African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)** and **Single African Air Transport Market**.

**The AfCFTA is signed by close to 50 countries** at the 2018 AU Summit.

**The AfCFTA creates one African market of 1.2 billion people**, with a GDP of US\$2.5 trillion, that has the potential to boost intra-African trade by 52% by 2020, <sup>12</sup> benefitting African producers, consumers and traders.

Continued progress is made on the **Free Movement of Persons Protocol**.



## 2020

The **global COVID-19 health pandemic** upends all plans, including travels.

**Trading under the AfCFTA** was delayed until January 2021.

In general, the trend is positive, with **93% of countries either improving or maintaining their scores** in the 2020 Index.



## 2017

**21 of 55 African countries moved upwards** in the rank on the Index since 2016.

**47 countries improved** or maintained their visa openness scores.

**The use of e-Visas has grown.**  
13 African countries use an e-Visa.



## 2019

In 2019, the **trend for African countries to further liberalize their visa regimes** continues, promoting greater ease of travel for visitors across the continent.

**A record 87% of African countries either improved** or maintained their score, an increase of 9% from the 2018 findings.

**47 countries improved** or maintained their score.



# visa openness in Africa

## 2022

As countries dealt with global uncertainty around the pandemic's impacts on health and the economy, many governments restricted travel or changed their visa regime.

Ten countries improved their score on visa openness, and 40 maintained their score.

48 countries out of 54—the vast majority of African countries—now offer visa-free travel to the nationals of at least one other African country.



## 2024

Of 54 countries on the continent, **17 have improved their AVOI score**, building on the 15 countries that showed an improvement in 2023.

**Twenty-nine countries' scores remain unchanged**, while eight countries score lower in this edition.

**Half of the RECs achieved a higher average score:** EAC, ECCAS, SADC and AMU all improved on their previous regional averages.



## 2021

Despite the COVID-19 lockdowns, **many African countries continue to signal visa openness** to the citizens of other countries on the continent.

Between 2016 and 2021, **36 countries—two-thirds of the continent—improved** or maintained their AVOI score.

**24 African countries—44% of the continent—**offered an e-Visa to Africans.

## 2023

**African countries continue dismantling barriers** to the movement of people across borders.

The continent's **average visa openness score is higher** than ever before.

**Pandemic-induced travel restrictions have been fully abolished**; visa openness today exceeds its pre-pandemic levels.

**Progress continues on the AfCFTA**, providing realistic prospects for benefits across the continent.



## 2025

The **broader commitment to visa openness remains unshaken**.

The evolution of countries' visa policies continues, and the **recognition of and support for visa-openness remains steady**.

**The use of e-Visa systems has increased significantly**, now standing at 31 countries, an increase from 26 in 2024.

# Integrate Africa

**“The Four Cardinal Points represent not only a framework for action, but a metaphor for our journey. Africa must look north, south, east and west. Not to imitate, but to draw wisdom and strength from each direction, while charting its own course.**

**Like a navigator guided by a compass, the African Development Bank Group should help Africa navigate toward greater resilience, ambition and sustainability”<sup>1</sup>**

Swearing-in speech of **Dr. Sidi Ould Tah**, 9<sup>th</sup> President of the African Development Bank Group

**The African Development Bank (AfDB) Group was established to promote regional integration in Africa.** For six decades, it has invested in unlocking Africa’s potential, in partnership with others, to tackle deep-rooted challenges. Advancing regional integration is a core part of the Bank’s Ten-Year Strategy (TYS 2024–2033). This is to be attained through investing in integrated regional infrastructure, intra-African trade and financial integration. Facilitating the movement of people across Africa’s borders cuts across all these aspects and remains a cornerstone of the Bank’s efforts to advance the African Union’s (AU) vision to create the world’s largest single market in Africa, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which has entered its operational stage.

A new strategic vision – known as the Four Cardinal Points – deepens and refines the YYS by focusing on four interlinked priorities.<sup>2</sup>

- **Mobilize Africa’s Capital**
- **Reform and Consolidate Africa’s Financial Architecture**
- **Harness Demographic Dividends**
- **Build Climate-Resilient Infrastructure and Add Real Value to Africa’s Natural Resources**

In mobilizing Africa’s capital and creating a cohesive financial architecture that can invest at scale in Africa’s development, the Bank positions itself on a stronger footing to support Africa’s renewal, turn its demographics into a dividend, create millions of jobs through industrialization and build resilient infrastructure that powers the AfCFTA and meets people’s growing needs.

**Find out more:**

<https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/african-development-bank-group-ten-year-strategy-2024-2033>

## Preface and acknowledgements



If I were to describe the dynamic on visa free mobility over the 10 years of production of the Africa Visa Openness Index, I would say, 'Full of promise but in need of accelerated action.'

Africans move, and do so mostly in Africa. It is here that most Africans see the opportunity for their dreams to actualize. And it is here that we must facilitate, with more vigour, the pace of visa-free mobility. A visa-free Africa is good economic policy. Our Africa today must be driven by trade and industry and at the heart of success is the ability of Africans to move to where they are needed. To where the opportunity lies. The AfCFTA is for people. Its' value is in creating opportunities for Africans within the continent, in goods, services, investment, intellectual property, and more. The presumption inherent herein is that Africans can reach those opportunities.

This is the true ethos of regional integration: That because collective action is required to harness Africa's opportunities, we must then work together to actualize the possibility.

Getting there is not impossible. It will take creativity and innovation, building and learning from those African countries that took the leap to grant visa-free access to fellow African citizens, and understanding the systems they have created to manage border movement and anticipate challenges, while managing, rather than avoiding, risk. Here, the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) have a lot to teach us - given that movement within some of them is "rights" based - extending to the depth of entry, residence and establishment. How are they managing? Where could things go wrong? And how can technology help us?

I close with a bold and audacious idea. What if we agreed that there should be an 'Africazone', much like the Schengen area? And that interested countries would simply signal and start? Could that accelerate attainment of the visa-free Africa?

For context, ten years ago (2015) we thought the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) would be attained in 2028. But, in 2015, AU Heads of State adopted a decision to fast-track creation of the CFTA. It seemed impossible then but the continent mobilized and three years later we had the AfCFTA - negotiated, signed, and open for ratification. Today, the Agreement has been in operation for five years. Can we be inspired by the same courage? To mobilize for the Africazone, we could start with the two most advanced RECs that already offer each other near full visa-free access, ECOWAS and EAC. Citizens of these two RECs could include their travel information in a data system - for transparency, not authorization...and then they let the people move...

Our continent has been built on bold ideas that scared many at the time, and seemed impossible. Could this be yet another?

I am grateful to the excellent team at the Regional Integration Coordination Office that has worked to provide the technical and analytical oversight involved in producing this report. Ms. Victoria Fajemilehin-Ayanleye stands out in this regard. Thanks to Johanna Pangeiko Nautwima and Gbanbele Coulibaly for the data analysis, and to Eckart Naumann for writing the report. Thanks are also due to Peggy King Cointepas for her work on the design and to Andrew Benton for editing. I thank Dr. Sabelo Mbokazi who led substantive contributions from the -African Union Commission, working closely with Tapiwa Mucheri.

**Dr. Joy Kategekwa**

Director

Regional Integration Coordination Office

African Development Bank Group

## Africa Visa Openness Index

The AVOI measures the extent to which African countries are open to visitors from other African countries. The AVOI analyses each country's visa requirements to show which African countries most facilitate travel to their territory.

For each country, the AVOI calculates the number of African countries whose citizens must obtain a visa before travelling there, the number of countries whose citizens may obtain a visa upon arrival, and the number of countries whose citizens can enter visa-free. Each country is then assigned an AVOI score and ranked accordingly.

First published in 2016, the AVOI also tracks changes in countries' scores over time. It does the same for the eight AU-recognised RECs. The report analyses these trends in light of other developments in Africa and in the world.

Data for this year's edition was collected in July and August 2025. As is the case with all previous editions, the main source of data and information was the International Air Transport Association (IATA).



[www.visaopenness.org](http://www.visaopenness.org)

**THE AVOI'S ONLINE PLATFORM** summarises the visa policy of each country in Africa, shows the changes in each country's scores and rankings from year to year, and explains how the continent is performing on visa openness overall.

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## Abbreviations and acronyms

AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AfDB	African Development Bank Group
AMU	Arab Maghreb Union
AU	African Union
AUC	African Union Commission
AVOI	Africa Visa Openness Index
CEMAC	<i>Communauté Économique et Monétaire de l'Afrique Centrale</i> (Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa)
CEN-SAD	Community of Sahel-Saharan States
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
e-Visa	Electronic visa
EAC	East African Community
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ETA	Electronic Travel Authorisation
EU	European Union
EUR	Euro
ESTA	Electronic System for Travel Authorization
GBP	Great Britain pound sterling
GTI	Guided Trade Initiative
IATA	International Air Transport Association
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
OSBP	One-stop border post
PFMP	Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons
QR code	Quick Response code
REC	Regional Economic Community
RoO	Rules of Origin
SAATM	Single African Air Transport Market
SADC	Southern African Development Community
TYS	Ten-Year Strategy
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
USD	United States dollar
VOA	Visa on arrival

## Use of terminology

The term ‘visa openness’ refers to the ease with which travellers can obtain authorisation to travel to and enter a country, pending final determination by the destination country’s immigration officials. The more visa-open a country, the easier it is for a traveller to visit that country.

There are different degrees of visa openness. Higher levels of visa openness refer to a generally more liberal policy for entry of visitors, meaning that visitors either do not need a visa to enter the territory, or can obtain a visa upon arrival. In contrast, a visa-restrictive country requires visitors to obtain a visa before they travel. In such instances, visitors may be required to obtain a visa or equivalent travel authorisation from an embassy, a consulate, or through an online process ahead of travel. While many countries have implemented electronic visa (e-Visa) systems, which add a measure of convenience to prospective travellers, the application process must still be completed ahead of travel.

The use of percentage scores, where assigned, generally relates to the share of other African countries that a country’s particular visa policy applies to, or in the case of visa reciprocity, the proportion of which a country’s visa policies are reciprocated by every other country within the Regional Economic Community (REC) to which they belong. Each intra-African country-to-country travel permutation is termed a travel scenario, and these form the basis for all percentage computations. The visa policy of each African country (54 in number) is gauged as it relates to every other African country (53), thus involving 2,862 (54x53) travel scenarios altogether.

Reciprocity involves countries aligning their visa regimes with one another, whether deliberately by design or by chance, and applying the same policy towards one another’s citizens. Positive reciprocity, as measured by the Africa Visa Openness Index (AVOI) and analysed in the respective REC sections, references countries’ alignment of visa-free policies within their region.

## Methodology

The individual scores, derived from countries' different categories of visa policies, serve as proxy indicators of the ease with which citizens can travel to each country, and as a broad reflection of how welcoming countries are to the citizens of other African countries.

The AVOI score for a country is calculated by aggregating the individual scores for the country's visa policy as applied towards the citizens of every other African country. Here the methodology primarily differentiates between policies that require travellers to apply for and obtain a visa ahead of travel, where travellers have the option of obtaining a visa on arrival at the port of entry in the destination country, and travel scenarios where entry is permitted without the requirement for a visa.

### Scores and rankings

AVOI scores range from 0 to 1, where 0 applies to a country with the most restrictive visa policies (that require a visa to be obtained ahead of travel by all travellers), while a score of 1 applies when a country has removed visa restrictions for all other African citizens.

The higher a country's index score (the closer to 1), the more "visa-open" the country is and the higher it ranks on the AVOI.

### Categories and weightings

To calculate each country's score, the AVOI assesses the visa policy each country applies to the citizens of each of the other 53 countries on the continent and classifies each policy in one of three categories. The AVOI gives each category a weighting:

Category	Weighting
Visa before travel	0
Visa on arrival	0.8
Visa-free	1.0

### Calculations

To compute the country's score, the AVOI follows four steps:

1. It counts the number of countries that fall in each visa category (visa before travel, visa on arrival, visa-free).
2. It converts that number into a percentage of all countries in Africa.
3. It weighs each percentage according to the weighting given to each category.
4. It adds the figures.

### Formula

AVOI score =  $[(\% \text{ of African countries whose nationals must obtain a visa before travelling} \times 0) + (\% \text{ of African countries whose nationals may obtain a visa on arrival} \times 0.8) + (\% \text{ of African countries whose nationals are not required to obtain a visa} \times 1)]$

### An example

Country X requires the nationals of 13 countries to obtain a visa before travel; allows the nationals of 30 countries to obtain a visa on arrival; and it allows the nationals of ten other countries to enter its territory visa-free. Country X's score is calculated as follows:

$$\text{AVOI score for Country X} = [(13/53 \times 0) + (30/53 \times 0.8) + (10/53 \times 1)] = 0.642$$

## Foreword, African Development Bank Group



In this 10th edition, the African Visa Openness Index (AVOI) holds a magnifying glass to one of the most important aspects of Africa's integration project: ensuring that its citizens, goods, services and investments are connected and not impeded by political borders.

Africa's integration journey is a story about people. Every day, millions of Africans cross borders to trade, study, access medical services, honour business and other appointments, explore new markets and reunite with families. These movements strengthen the economic and social fabric that binds our continent together. The Africa Visa Openness Index captures this human story through evidence and shows how policy decisions made in capitals translate into real experiences at the borders.

The 2025 AVOI edition is a continuation in a tradition of transparency. The data shows that Africa has made meaningful gains. More Africans can now travel visa free across the continent compared to a decade ago. 28.2% of intra-African travel routes no longer require visas, and a small group of countries have fully opened their doors to African visitors – requiring no visa, nor reciprocity. These successes offer encouragement - and indeed a benchmark. Since the first AVOI edition, 39 countries have improved their visa openness score. Many governments have simplified entry, expanding visa-free or visa-on-arrival access for African travellers. Many countries in the continent are now more open to visitors from other African countries compared to a decade ago, a noteworthy achievement that deserves to be recognised, and one that demonstrates what is possible when political will aligns with the vision of an integrated continent.

The findings also reveal areas that require deeper attention. Just over half of all intra-African travel still require a visa before departure. Several countries are shifting from visas on arrival to e-Visas or electronic travel authorisations. These systems can improve efficiency and support more secure border management, but they are also costly, complex, and make travel more difficult for ordinary Africans. The broader message from the African Development Bank is that openness remains inconsistent and African citizens continue to face barriers when moving within their continent.

I am encouraged to see the continued leadership of Regional Economic Communities – this is where the story of a visa free Africa continues to move faster. In the ECOWAS we see full visa free movement as well as full reciprocity – creating real opportunities for cross-border trade, tourism, industry and investment within the region. Also, East Africa is building up progress that is encouraging, and we look forward to when they will be comparable to the progress in ECOWAS.

As we reflect on the findings of this 10<sup>th</sup> Edition of the AVOI, we encourage governments to use the data to benchmark how we can accelerate progress of a fully integrated visa free Africa. Let us build trust, capacity and systems that allow for the immense talent our continent holds to be the locomotive for our growth.

A more open Africa is within reach. When Africans are able to travel freely across their continent, they build the partnerships, markets and innovations that shape our common future – and bring us closer to the Africa we Want. The African Development Bank remains committed to supporting Africa's efforts for deeper regional integration.

**Nnenna Lily Nwabuo**

Vice President, Regional Development, Integration and Business Delivery  
African Development Bank Group



Africa's integration journey has never been linear, yet it has been undeniably resilient. Decade after decade, our continent has shown that cooperation is stronger than fragmentation. Even in the face of global crises, internal conflict and external shocks, African countries, individually and through their Regional Economic Communities, have continued to choose collaboration. Borders have opened, tariffs have been reduced, the movement of people has been eased and regulatory frameworks have been harmonised in ways that would have seemed inconceivable only a generation ago.

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), a flagship project of Agenda 2063, our blueprint for structural transformation, has now entered a new and promising phase. With 49 countries having ratified the Agreement, implementation is accelerating. Member States are advancing their tariff commitments, deepening progress on services trade, and modernising their regulatory environments. These efforts are reshaping how African people and businesses think about supply chains, markets and emerging investment opportunities.

While weaknesses in infrastructure, logistics and regulatory alignment continue to constrain the full promise of the AfCFTA, these challenges must reinforce, not dampen, our resolve. Africa has the demographic vitality, the entrepreneurial energy and the natural wealth to fully realise the *"Africa We Want."* Supporting reforms that unlock these assets is, therefore, essential.

At the heart of this vision is the movement of people. It is people who will design, produce and trade goods across borders. It is people who will service the One African Market, build integrated value chains, transfer knowledge and forge partnerships that create new opportunities. Human mobility is not an accessory to integration, it is its lifeblood.

The 10<sup>th</sup> edition of the Africa Visa Openness Index reminds us that the pathways to a more integrated continent are neither new nor unknown. Visa-free travel, labour mobility, intra-African trade, knowledge exchange and human capital development remain critical enablers of the continent we are striving to build.

I, therefore, call on all Member States to accelerate the ratification of the AU Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons, a bold and visionary continental instrument. It offers a transformative solution to advancing mobility, deepening integration and strengthening our collective economic resilience.

Together, let us commit to making the promise of a dynamic, resilient and people-centred single African market a lived reality, not just an aspiration. Africa's future depends on it.

**H.E. Amb. Amma Adomaa Twum-Amoah**

Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development  
African Union Commission

# VISA OPENNESS IN AFRICA: 2025 Findings

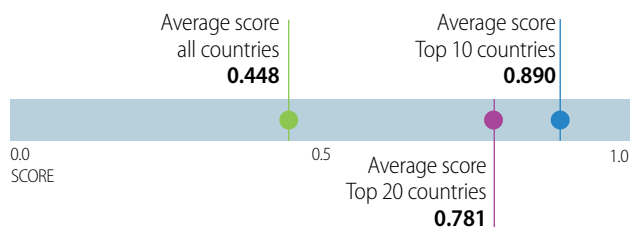


# 2025: Visa-openness remains a work in progress

## 2025 marks the tenth consecutive year that the Africa Visa Openness Index (AVOI) has tracked Africa's visa policies.

This edition marks an important milestone, by offering an opportunity to shine a light on notable developments while reflecting on where progress has stagnated. This year's AVOI shows a combined visa openness score of 0.445 - significantly lower than the three previous years and on par with 2021. Unpacking this data over the following pages allows a more nuanced assessment of where visa openness has progressed, regressed, or where technological interventions have shifted the visa application process away from the destination (visa-on-arrival) to the departure country (e-Visa / Electronic Travel Authorisation - ETA) - which impacts a country's score.

### Average AVOI scores, 2025



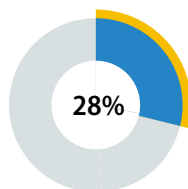
In tracking visa openness across Africa, AVOI has applied a consistent methodology through the past ten years, ensuring a high level of comparability in measuring each

country's visa policy with respect to citizens of every other African country. A full score (1) is allocated to each country-to-country travel scenario where a country removes the requirement for a visa. A slightly lower score (0.8) is given in a visa-on-arrival scenario, to reward countries that allow travellers to visit without the need for pre-travel formalities. Finally, for scenarios where a visa must still be obtained ahead of travel, whether through traditional paper-based processes, or through digital means, no points (0) are allocated.

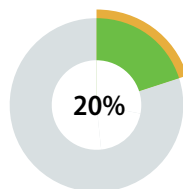
This year, Rwanda and The Gambia retain their top ranking, while Benin moves to 4<sup>th</sup> place following the recent introduction of a visa for citizens of five countries.<sup>3</sup> Kenya becomes the third-most visa-free country, following recent updates to its ETA system which now exempts citizens from 52 African countries from these processes.

During 2025, 20 countries made changes to their visa-policy regime that affected citizens of one or more African country. This resulted in 11 countries scoring higher, and nine lower. Meanwhile, 34 countries made no changes and maintained their overall score. There has been a small increase in the number of travel scenarios that are now visa-free (814, up from 803 in 2024) - accounting for 28.2% of intra-African travel scenarios - reaching their highest ever level.

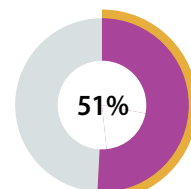
## Visa openness in Africa, 2025



Africans do not require a visa for 28% of Intra-Africa\* travel



Africans can obtain a visa on arrival for 20% of Intra-Africa\* travel

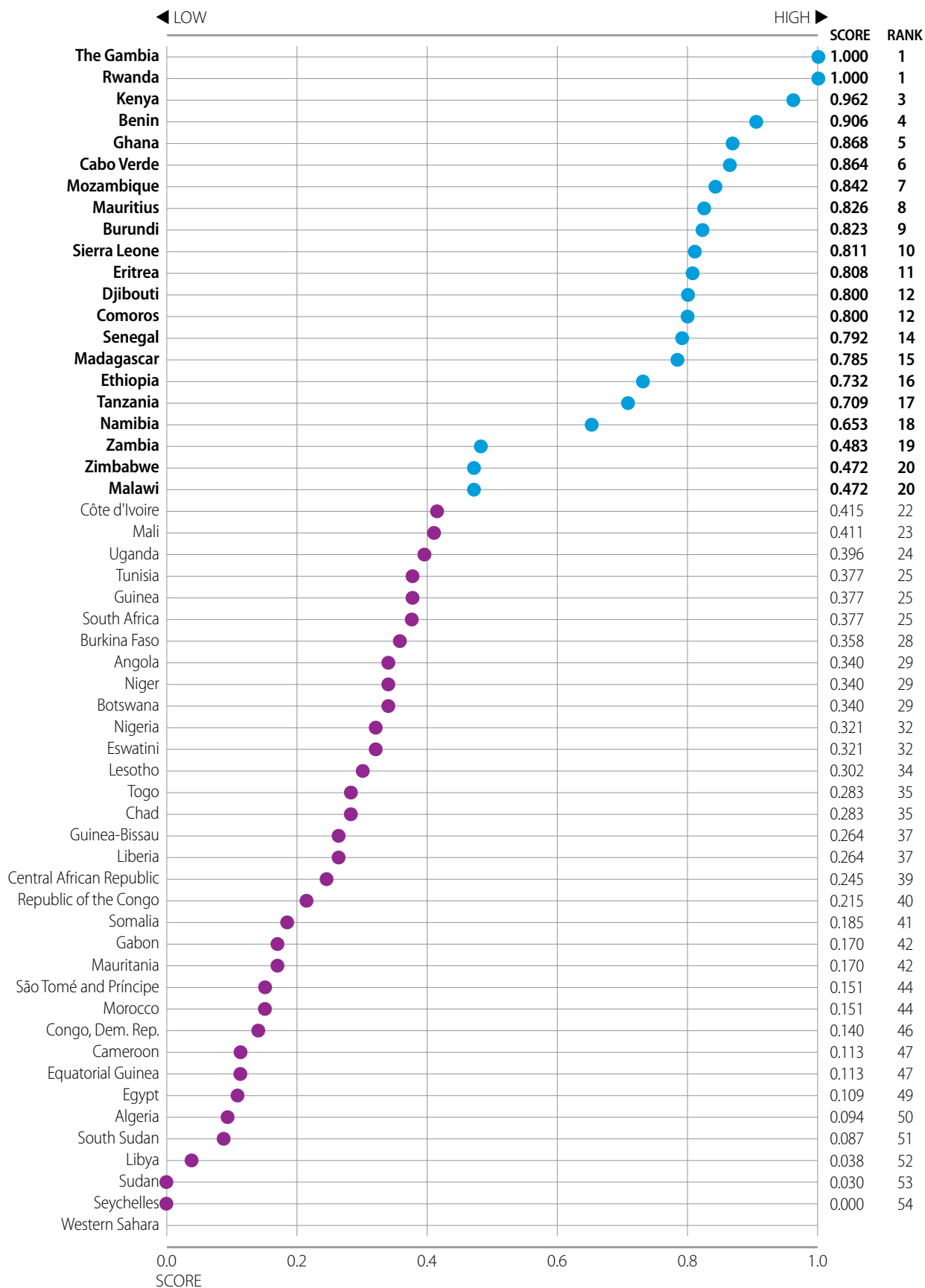


Africans need a visa before travelling for 51% of Intra-Africa\* travel

\*Intra-Africa travel refers to travel by African citizens between African countries.

NOTE: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

## Visa openness in Africa 2025: Country scores and rankings



Scores range from 0–1 (highest).

Source: African Development Bank calculations based on IATA data, July–August 2025.

However, there has been a significant increase, from 1,348 in 2024 to 1,463 in 2025, in travel scenarios that are now subject to visa-related formalities ahead of travel. This pushes the 'visa-required' metric up, from 47.1% in 2024 to 51.1% in 2025, past the half-way mark and back to a similar level last recorded in 2021. Meanwhile, visa-on-arrival facilities are offered in only 20.4% of all travel scenarios, their lowest level ever, and lower than the 24.8% recorded in 2024.

Closer scrutiny of the data reveals that there has been a significant switch from visa-on-arrival facilities to visa required ahead of travel, rather than towards visa-free status. Four countries - Guinea Bissau, Mauritania, Nigeria, and Somalia - switched from broad visa-on-arrival policies to requiring a visa ahead of travel. This is a step backwards on Africa's visa openness. However, two of the countries (Guinea-Bissau and Somalia) recently launched an e-Visa portal, taking to 31 the number of countries that offer this. An e-Visa offers more convenience to prospective travellers than a traditional visa. Nonetheless, it is still a visa that is required ahead of travel and is treated as such. This affects a country's AVOI score, and in some cases results in a significant drop in ranking. Seychelles is a case in point. Its ETA is categorised as an e-Visa (it is required ahead of travel and contains similar information requirements and costs as some other countries' e-Visas), and this determines the country's rank in 2025.

Five countries implemented individual policy changes that now require a visa ahead of travel from citizens of affected countries who previously travelled visa-free. This was observed in the case of Algeria (1), Angola (1), Benin (5), Tunisia (1) and Uganda (2), with the number in brackets denoting the countries whose citizens are affected by this change. Compared to the previous two years (2023, 2024), we see a higher number of policy changes in 2025, from visa-free to visa required ahead of travel.

**...countries are resorting to more restrictive visa policies either on an individual basis, or more broadly, by switching from a visa-on-arrival to e-Visa facilities. ...[which] extends the time ahead of travel and impacts freedom of movement.**

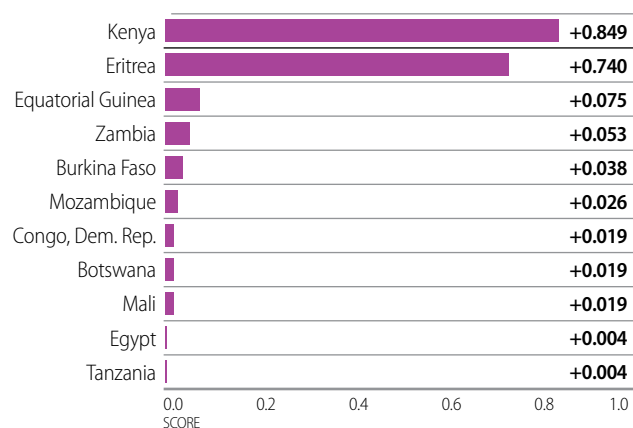
This suggests that countries are resorting to more restrictive visa policies either on an individual basis, or more broadly by switching from a visa-on-arrival to e-Visa facilities. In each of the two scenarios here, obligatory travel authorisation extends the time ahead of travel and affects freedom of movement. Technological advances applied through e-Visas provide countries with

a degree of pre-screening that is otherwise not possible with visa-free or visa-on-arrival access. For prospective travellers, this can translate into travel convenience when compared to traditional visa processes ahead of travel. It also offers economic benefits and efficiency gains to countries implementing such systems, but it opens the door to more restrictive approaches to intra-Africa travel that impede rather than ease travel. It remains a requirement that must be complied with ahead of travel.

## Spotlight on 2024–2025 - Notable changes

Although the 2025 average AVOI score [0.445] across all African countries is lower than that of the previous three years (2022 – 2024), and only marginally higher than in 2021 [0.444], some countries made notable policy changes to ease cross-border travel in 2025, while others fell in the rankings as new visa policies came into force, even if in the context of introducing e-Visa systems. Below, we shine the spotlight on a few.

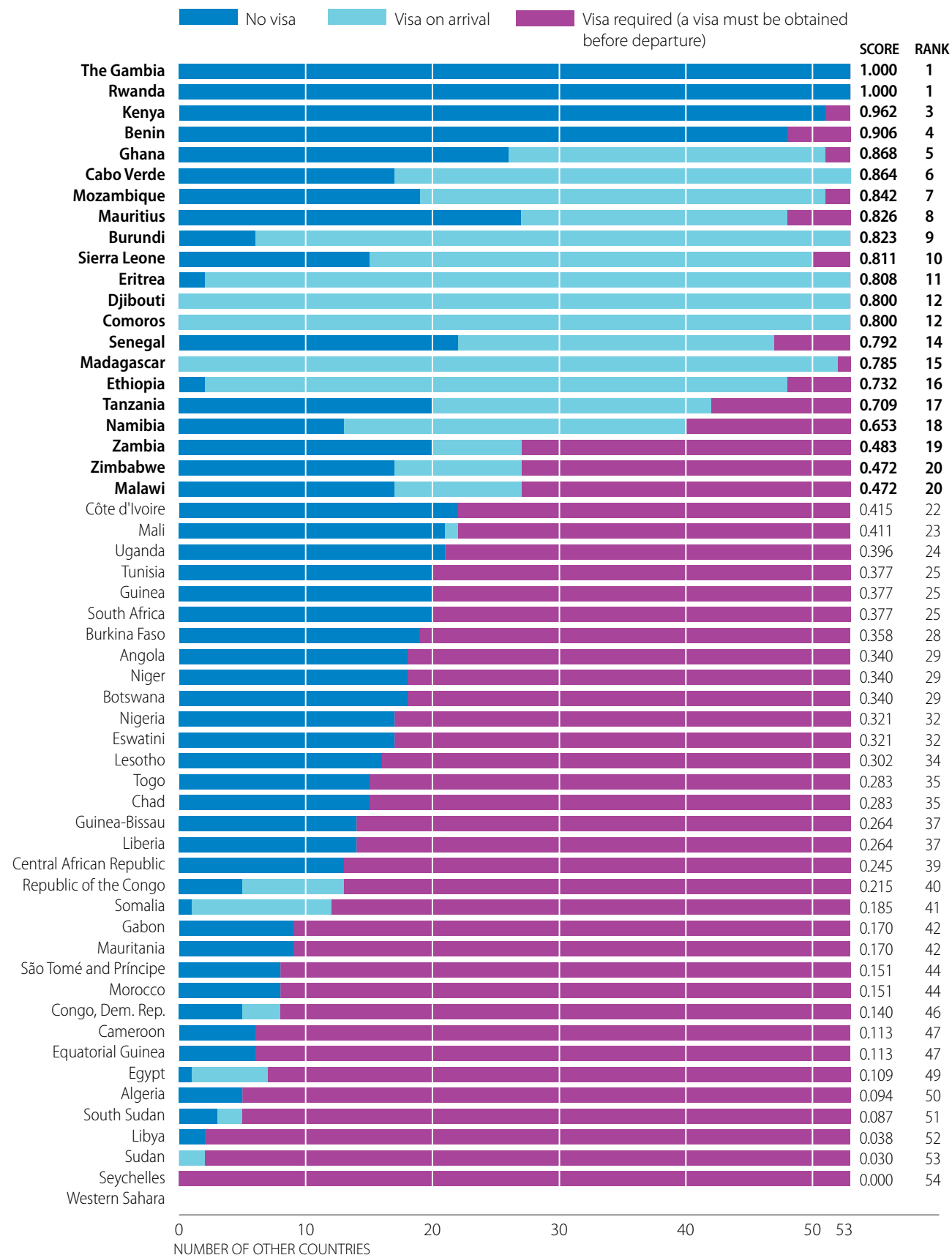
### Countries that increased their AVOI score, 2024–2025



### Kenya

Kenya has made large strides towards visa openness over the past year, shifting towards a visa-free regime for African travellers. In 2024, when waiving visa requirements from most African countries, it implemented an ETA. For many previously visa-exempt countries on the continent, this represented a significant additional administrative burden and cost, *de facto* resulting in a requirement for an e-Visa prior to travel. Initially only some EAC Member States were exempt from the ETA process. But now, Kenya has exempted African citizens more broadly from the requirement of a visa, and also of an ETA. Only citizens of Libya and Somalia still require an ETA to travel to Kenya.

## Profile of countries' visa policies, 2025



Scores range from 0–1 (highest).

Source: African Development Bank calculations based on IATA data, July–August 2025.

With this latest development, Kenya has set an important marker on easing movement of persons, reinforcing its leading role as a hub that connects inland populations with Kenya's cities, transport routes and seaports. Following the country's downgrade on the AVOI in 2024 in response to its ETA processes which were categorised as an e-Visa, Kenya now attains its highest ever rating, coming in third, behind Rwanda and The Gambia which share joint first place.



This policy change is significant because Kenya's economy and location make it a key driver of regional integration. As a member of COMESA and EAC, Kenya plays a central role in facilitating trade, investment and the movement of people in the region, providing port facilities for trade to and from landlocked countries like Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda, South Sudan and Uganda. Kenya has expanded the number of One-Stop Border Posts to reduce processing times for cross-border traders, which is an efficiency enabler for enhanced regional trade.

## Zambia

In January 2025, Zambia abolished the requirement for a visa from citizens of 53 countries globally - a move aimed at enhancing the country's status as a tourism, business, trade and investment destination.<sup>4</sup> This increases visa-free access to citizens of 167 countries, including an additional six African countries - Cabo Verde, Comoros, Madagascar, São Tomé and Príncipe, Liberia and Morocco, the latter two of which previously required a visa ahead of travel to Zambia. This also raised the country's AVOI rank from 24<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> with 20 African countries now granted visa-free access, while citizens of seven countries can obtain a visa on arrival, and 26 remain subject to a visa ahead of travel, available through the country's e-Visa portal.



Within SADC, Zambia already maintains one of the most open visa regimes, with visa-free entry now available to citizens of all but one country (DRC), which is still subject to a visa on arrival. Zambia has made significant strides in promoting inbound tourism through its 'Destination Zambia' campaign, and is prioritising air connectivity within the country especially to a broader range of heritage and wildlife destinations, and implementing road infrastructure improvements to support expansion of tourism access and economic development. Inbound tourism has increased to record levels, rising by 35% in 2024.<sup>5</sup>

## Guinea Bissau, Mauritania, Nigeria and Somalia

These four countries switched to a visa required ahead of travel in 2025, from previously offering visa-on-arrival facilities to citizens of most African countries. This translates into a collective impact on 162 travel scenarios where citizens of African countries are now required to obtain a visa ahead of travel, and has resulted in the four countries' placing in the lower half of the index. However, it is important to point out that three of the four countries - Mauritania, Nigeria, and Somalia - offer e-Visas to prospective travellers. In fact, Mauritania and Somalia have newly developed e-Visa portals. While e-Visas invariably entail obtaining a visa ahead of travel, curtailing freedom of movement, they can be a potentially important stepping stone in countries' evolution towards enhanced openness, while also addressing possible security concerns.

## Seychelles

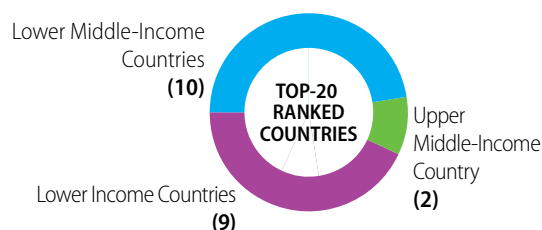
Seychelles has in the past ranked at the top of the AVOI. As an Island State, patterns of travel to and from Seychelles differ from those involving countries on the continent, with arrivals either by air or by sea. The country largely digitalized its border management processes through the Seychelles Electronic Border System<sup>6</sup>, and was the first African country to implement a fully-fledged ETA system applicable to all incoming travellers, having recently expanded to include maritime arrivals. All prospective travellers to Seychelles who are non-citizens are required to apply for an ETA ahead of travel, as per the country's Immigration Act.

To obtain an ETA, applicants must provide passport details, contact information, a "selfie", as well as trip information (a confirmed airline or cruise ticket with arrival and departure dates, accommodation booking confirmation for each location of one's stay in Seychelles, as well as a letter of invitation if visiting friends or family). There is a cost involved, which requires the use of a credit or debit card. Since the ETA requirements substantively overlap with other countries' e-Visa systems, and IATA likewise indicates this as a pre-travel requirement at the time of boarding, the AVOI classifies the ETA in the same way that it classifies an e-Visa, which is considered a visa-ahead-of-travel, and informs Seychelles' updated ranking on the AVOI. Readers will recall that Kenya's ETA was similarly categorised as equivalent to an e-Visa in last year's report, which at the time saw it ranked 46<sup>th</sup> on the index.<sup>7</sup>

## Africa's 2025 top-20 ranked countries

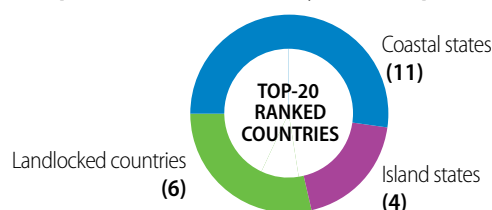
**Eighteen of the top-20 ranked countries are classified as either lower middle income (ten) or low-income (eight) countries**, while only two of the eight upper middle-income countries are in this group. Six of the top-20 are also landlocked. The reasons for accelerating visa openness may vary for lower-income and land-locked countries, but the need to reduce barriers to trade and investment and exploit tourism opportunities are important considerations and deliberate policy responses. Lower income countries may also be less vulnerable to inward migration pressures and may display more open attitudes towards visa openness, compared to higher income countries that may offer more economic opportunities, and which can manifest itself in different sensitivities and perceptions towards open borders and easy entry.

### 2025 top-20 ranked countries by income levels

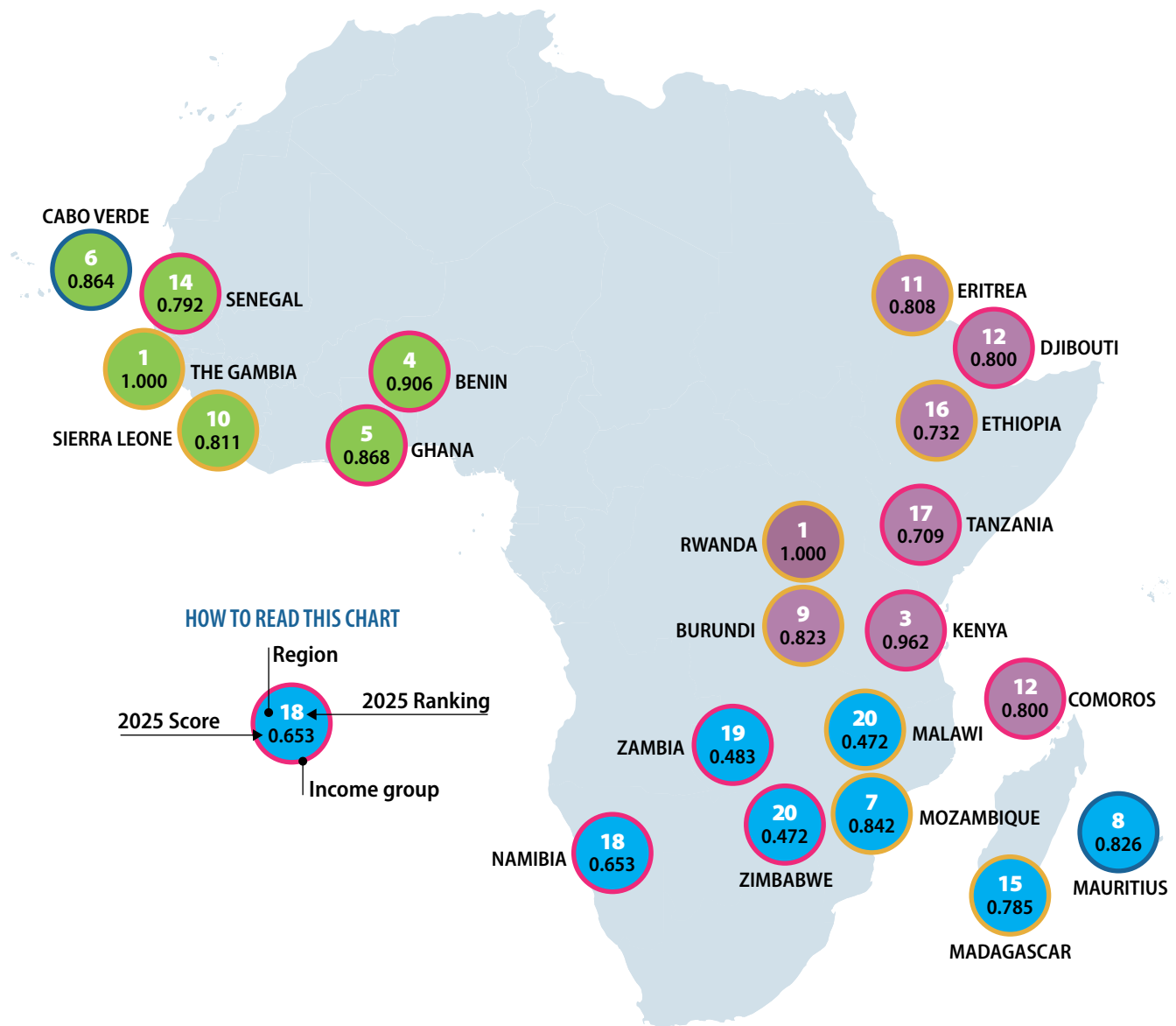


Four of the top-20 ranked countries are Island States, with Cabo Verde and Mauritius inside the top-10, and the latter classified as upper middle income. Island States are in a unique situation with respect to access, as they are typically not part of the same migration and travel routes that would apply to continental African countries, because access is more difficult, and invariably costlier, involving expensive air travel. Their visa policies range from visa-on-arrival (Comoros, Madagascar) to a mix of visa-on-arrival and visa-free policies (Cabo Verde, Mauritius), albeit with Mauritius still requiring a visa ahead of travel from citizens of five African countries.

### 2025 top-20 ranked countries by access to ports



## A closer look at Africa's 2025 top-20 ranked countries: score, ranking, region, income group, and access to ports



### BY REGION

**East Africa (8)**  
Burundi  
Comoros  
Djibouti  
Eritrea  
Ethiopia  
Kenya  
Rwanda  
Tanzania

**West Africa (6)**  
Benin  
Cabo Verde  
The Gambia  
Ghana  
Senegal  
Sierra Leone

**Southern Africa (7)**  
Madagascar  
Mauritius  
Mozambique  
Namibia  
Zambia  
Zimbabwe  
Malawi

### BY INCOME GROUP\*

**Upper Middle-Income Country (2)**  
Cabo Verde  
Mauritius

**Lower Middle-Income Countries (10)**  
Benin  
Comoros  
Djibouti  
Ghana  
Kenya  
Namibia  
Senegal  
Tanzania  
Zambia  
Zimbabwe

**Lower Income Countries (9)**  
Burundi  
Eritrea  
Ethiopia  
The Gambia  
Madagascar  
Malawi  
Mozambique  
Rwanda  
Sierra Leone

### BY ACCESS TO PORTS

**Landlocked countries (6)**  
Burundi  
Ethiopia  
Rwanda  
Malawi  
Zambia  
Zimbabwe

**Island states (4)**  
Cabo Verde  
Comoros  
Madagascar  
Mauritius

**Coastal states (11)**  
Benin  
Djibouti  
Eritrea  
The Gambia  
Ghana  
Kenya  
Mozambique  
Namibia  
Senegal  
Sierra Leone  
Tanzania

\*Source, income classification:

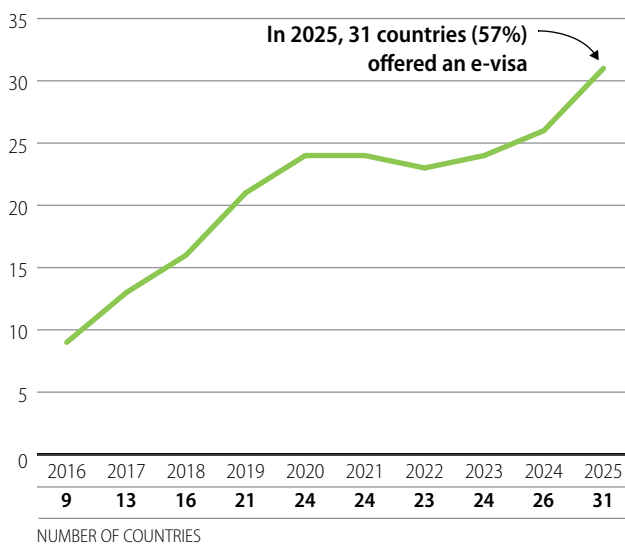
<https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/opendata/world-bank-country-classifications-by-income-level-for-2024-2025>

## Update on e-Visas

**e-Visas are digital equivalents of paper-based visas**, but are obtained electronically through an online platform, thereby negating the need to visit or send a passport to consular offices.

As of 2025, 31 African countries adopted e-Visa systems, an increase from 26 reported in 2024. New e-Visa platforms were noted for Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Mauritania, Namibia, and Somalia.

### Number of countries offering e-Visas, 2016–2025



e-Visas are important and potentially powerful aspects of a country's digital strategy and immigration modernisation process, serving as a convenient way to manage inbound travel, expand global reach, obtain cost efficiencies (by reducing the overhead on consular staff) and capture electronically relevant data of prospective travellers. e-Visas hold several distinct advantages over paper-based traditional visas, as reflected on below:

#### Key benefits of an e-Visa are:

- **Convenience:** A faster and simpler process through which the applicant applies electronically from the comfort of their home or office.
- **Lower cost:** Travellers experience lower costs and administrative overheads because they do not need to apply in-person. For governments, e-Visas mean automated screening, fewer walk-ins, and the use of fewer resources, especially by its consular services.

- **Better accessibility and transparency:** The ability to obtain a visa electronically is an attractive proposition for prospective travellers, especially compared to paper-based processes and their associated logistics. This, in turn, may contribute to higher visitor numbers. e-Visa portals lend themselves to greater transparency by providing relevant and complete information (documentation, eligibility, costs) to the applicant.

**e-Visas also have several drawbacks**, which are important considerations for travellers and governments.

- **Digital barriers:** e-Visa applications, by default, require access to digital infrastructure: computers or mobile devices, and a stable internet connection, alongside the ability to furnish relevant documents in digital format.
- **Risk of fraud:** Given the plethora of private visa facilitation services, and sometimes weakly designed official government portals, there is a risk of applicants using incorrect or scam websites that mimic official platforms and unintentionally sharing data with third parties – which can be used for illegal means.
- **Limited applicability:** Some e-Visas limit the traveller to entry through main airports, rather than land borders.
- **Systems issues:** During preparation of this and previous AVOI reports, instances of offline and malfunctioning e-Visa portals were observed, or portals with unencrypted web connections or coding vulnerabilities. A weakly designed e-Visa portal has data privacy concerns and potentially exposes payment information to risk. Governments that implement an e-Visa have a responsibility to ensure data integrity and security, consistent uptime, efficient processing and upfront transparency around information requirements and visa eligibility.
- **Similar obligations:** Both e-Visas and traditional paper-based visas may impose broadly similar obligations on the applicant, which may include a digital copy of a passport, a head and shoulders photograph, and potentially various other pieces of information such as copies of bank statements to prove financial means, health insurance, return air ticket, hotel or accommodation details, and so forth. Payment typically involves the input of credit or debit card details in a payment portal linked to the e-Visa platform. A visa may then be issued in electronic form, by way of a confirmation letter in PDF format, a QR code, or in another format. Sometimes, the e-Visa process will require the applicant to collect an e-Visa passport sticker on arrival at the destination country, creating additional inconvenience.

## Electronic Travel Authorisations: another name for e-Visas?

While implementation of ETA systems is not a new development globally, their uptake has accelerated in recent years as more countries adopt pre-travel authorisation systems, generally aimed at travellers who otherwise qualify for visa-free entry. ETAs are designed to be applied as digital processes through which prospective travellers submit certain personal information to the destination country ahead of travel. This provides advanced notice of the intention to travel and shares information that might otherwise not be readily captured by immigration authorities, particularly in instances where visa-free travel is permitted. In essence, ETAs walk back the notion that travellers can freely travel to their destination without the country being aware of travel plans ahead of arrival. This offers the destination country an opportunity to review and adjudicate the application in advance, which may be enabled by different layers of automation.

**At their core, ETAs potentially serve several purposes:**

- **Advanced-notice risk assessment:** By submitting traveller personal information ahead of time, a destination country's border authorities have time to cross-check identity against *inter alia* security databases and ensure compliance with any other conditions (e.g. communicable diseases or other health conditions). The reviewer has the option to reject the application for non-compliance based on self-declarations or other reasons.
- **Data capture:** Information on arrivals is captured digitally, allowing aggregation and disaggregation of data, which may be useful for policy formulation and execution purposes, such as tourism planning.
- **Policy flexibility and cost efficiency:** An ETA system is readily scalable and offers cost benefits, while also giving the host country flexibility to amend any entry criteria and information requirements, all in a centralised, digital manner.

Africa's adoption of ETA systems is a recent phenomenon, but one that is gaining traction. Seychelles and later Kenya first adopted fully-fledged ETAs, as discussed elsewhere in this report (see pages 13-16). In a more recent development, Seychelles extended the requirement of an ETA to maritime arrivals, while Kenya now exempts citizens from all African countries, apart from Libya and Somalia, from having to obtain one.

Mozambique recently launched an ETA portal that would require travellers from 29 visa-exempt countries to obtain an ETA at least 48 hours ahead of arrival. However, the country's national migration service (SENAMI) announced that technical constraints in the registration system resulted in temporary suspension of the system. The system remains suspended at the time of writing and has no impact on the country's AVOI score.<sup>8</sup>

Zambia, citing security considerations, is reported to be considering the launch an ETA - called an 'Advanced Passenger Information System' (APIS) - to pre-screen travellers ahead of arrival. It aims to balance the need for both easy travel and national security considerations.<sup>9</sup>

Morocco has introduced a temporary ETA for the period September 2025 to January 2026 which is applicable to citizens of eight African countries that otherwise qualify for visa-free entry (Morocco requires a visa ahead of travel from citizens of all other African countries). This development is in conjunction with the hosting of the 2025 Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) football tournament. For travellers attending AFCON and holding match tickets, entry authorisation and tournament tickets are combined into a dedicated mobile phone app.

South Africa is also rolling out an ETA which has been in a pilot phase since October 2025 and is aimed at G20 meeting participants. It is materially different from other ETAs as it applies to applicants from countries where a visa is required ahead of travel (rather than from visa-exempt countries) but digitalises, streamlines, and largely automates, this process. As such, it eases the travel experience by replacing traditional visa processes that previously had to be obtained through consular channels.

Internationally, ETAs were initially adopted to allow countries to have advance information of the pending arrival of visa-exempt travellers, thus also providing an opportunity for authorities to intervene and deny access should it be deemed necessary. As African countries consider similar policies, it is crucial that such practices are not applied simply as visas in disguise. If African countries that already grant visa-free or visa-on-arrival access go the ETA route, it could become a regressive step insofar as the free movement of people is concerned. If they do, then these should be cost-free and limited to basic information requirements, perhaps to address a security angle. ETAs should not undermine or frustrate the intent of visa-free policies.

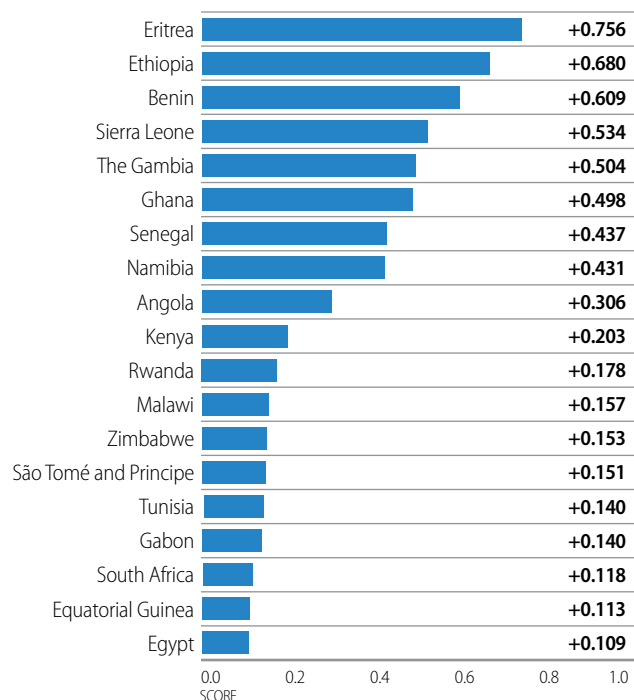
The AVOI recognises that countries' immigration systems and policy prerogatives differ, and that there are opportunities stemming from technological developments and broader digitalisation processes. In producing this report, processes that require travel authorisation ahead of travel were reviewed, and that, in the context of easing travel and established intra-Africa visa openness standards, may, *de facto*, be equivalent to obtaining an e-Visa ahead of travel. Factors such as cost, single-entry validity, the need for a confirmed travel itinerary and proof of accommodation, alongside comprehensive biometrics and contact details, can impose obligations on travellers that may be no different or more onerous than the requirements expected from an online e-Visa process.

In practice, therefore, ETAs operate in a similar way to e-Visas. While e-Visas represent technological progress, the requirement for any visa or advance travel permission still constitutes an administrative barrier to the movement of people across borders.

## The AVOI at 10: Progress 2016 to 2025

**Ten years of tracking African countries' visa policies allows for reflection on progress made since 2016.** The leading metrics make for positive reading. In 28.2% of all country-to-country travel, African citizens can now visit another country without the requirement of a visa, up from only 20% in 2016. In relative terms, compared to ten years ago this translates into a 40% improvement in intra-Africa travel supported by visa-free access. But a visa is still compulsory ahead of travel in 51% of all travel scenarios, down from 55% ten years ago, though still hovering above the 50% mark. This invites introspection: While overall there has been significant progress in efforts to ease intra-Africa travel, there remains a long way to go.

### Countries that increased\* their AVOI score, 2016–2025



\*19 countries that increased their score less than 0.100 are not shown: Botswana, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Eswatini, Guinea, Lesotho, Libya, Mauritius, Mozambique, Niger, South Sudan, Tanzania, Zambia

Thirty-nine countries have improved their score on the AVOI since the first report in 2016, a reflection of broad, overall progress towards easing intra-Africa travel. Yet progress has often been slow, as higher individual scores often result from only small, incremental changes, countries entering into bilateral arrangements that embed reciprocal easing of visa policies into these reforms, or involve countries embracing more liberal policies but only within the confines of a REC, sometimes supported by a regional agreement on intra-regional movement.

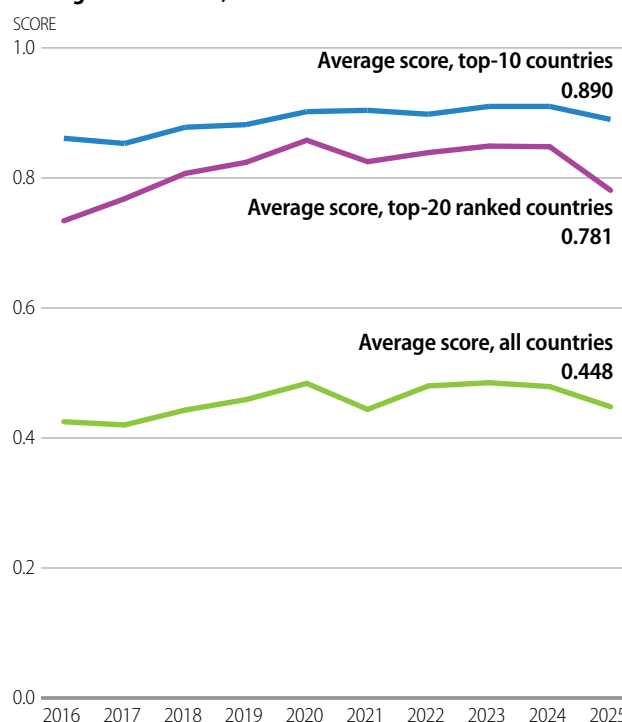
**...progress is rooted in individual country policies and through collective efforts of several of Africa's RECs.**

No further ratifications of the AU's Free Movement Protocol beyond the initial four countries have followed in the past six years, suggesting that progress on visa openness has not been driven by this instrument - even if the underlying ideals of the Protocol may be more widely supported. Rather, progress is rooted in individual country policies and through collective efforts of several of Africa's RECs. Only in a small number of instances have progressive - and no doubt bold - policies seen countries implement visa-free entry at a continental level, or have countries introduced visa-on-arrival policies that eased the travel experience when compared to traditional visa processes that were needed ahead of travel.

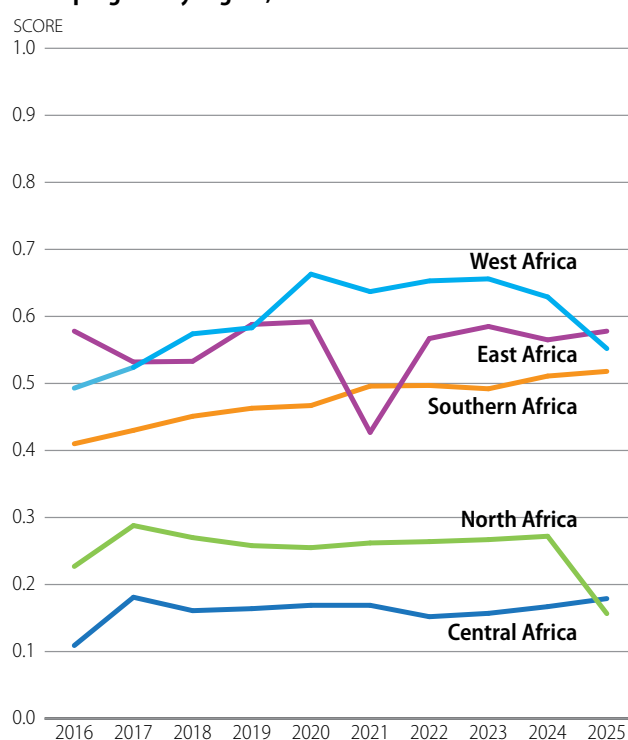
Over the 10-year period, Benin, Seychelles, The Gambia, and more recently Rwanda, have been trailblazers on visa openness, offering visa-free access to the rest of the continent. Benin stands out as one of the most improved countries on the AVOI, but this year dropped from joint 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> place after adding visa requirements for citizens of five African countries. Benin climbed from 31<sup>st</sup> place in the first edition, attaining top spot in 2018.

Similarly, The Gambia became visa-free to citizens of all African countries in 2020 and has retained its place at the top in subsequent years. Rwanda reached its visa-free policy milestone in 2023. And Seychelles, which had previously occupied its place at the top of the AVOI since the first report, later launched an ETA system - compulsory for all visitors and recently extended to maritime arrivals - to be obtained by prospective travellers ahead of travel. Kenya's impressive progress has been explained earlier in this report.

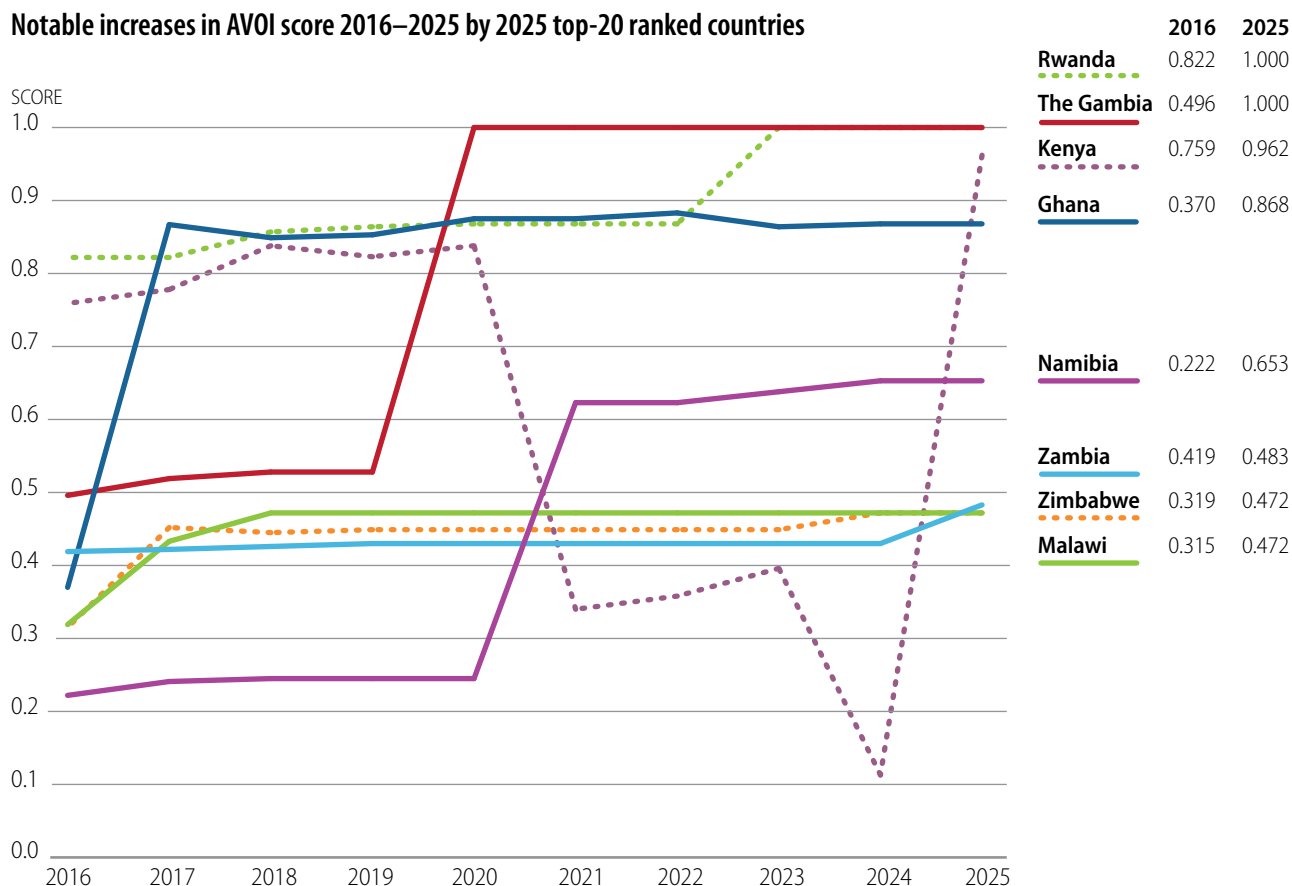
**Average AVOI scores, 2016–2025**



**Score progress by region, 2016–2025**



## Notable increases in AVOI score 2016–2025 by 2025 top-20 ranked countries



Several other countries have also made significant progress, even if sometimes starting from a relatively low base. Eritrea and Ethiopia are two of the most improved countries when considering the difference in overall score in 2025 versus 2016, in terms of the AVOI's assessment methodology and scoring system. Eritrea recently introduced visa-on-arrival applicable to all countries (except citizens of Kenya and Uganda who enter visa-free), while Ethiopia now only requires a visa ahead of travel from citizens of five countries (Egypt, Eritrea, Libya, Nigeria and Sudan), with its vastly more liberal visa regime first noted in the 2019 edition (and then interrupted by a more restrictive visa-policy period during Covid-19, as reflected in the 2021 report).

Several West African countries - particularly Ghana, Senegal and Sierra Leone - all now feature high on the index after making significant progress in adopting more liberal visa policies. They had, for some time, already demonstrated visa openness towards citizens of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

More recently, progress on easing travel for African citizens has been slow and ambiguous, with positive changes often small and incremental. This year's net increase in visa-free travel scenarios is outweighed by the significant increase in visa-required policies, and visa openness has advanced only on a more targeted, individual and sometimes bilateral basis (Kenya's relaxation of its ETA requirements being a notable exception).

## The metrics that measure visa openness

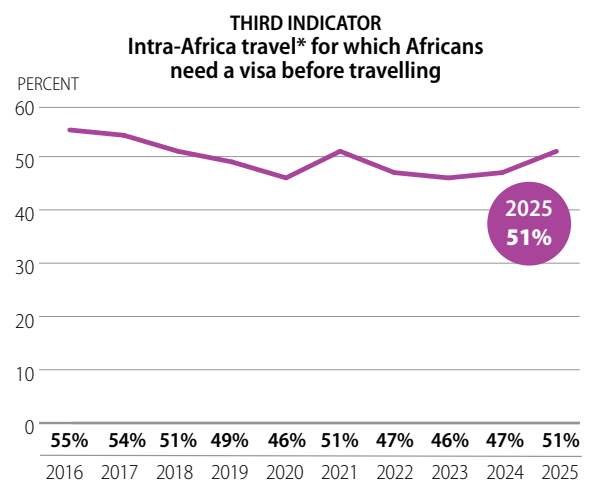
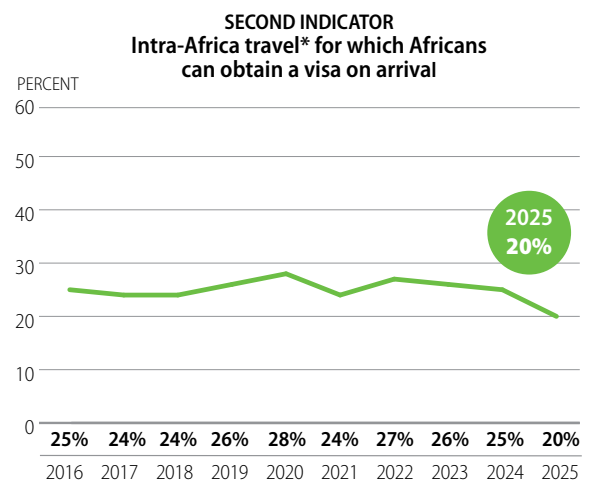
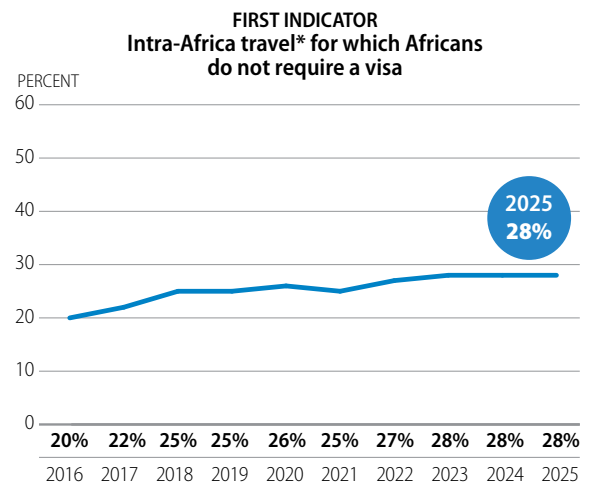
Progress since 2016 can be tracked through three key metrics. The **first metric** tracks changes in the number of country-to-country travel scenarios where no visa is required. This has reached an all-time high (814 country-to-country connections are now visa-free), slightly improved from last year (803).

The **second metric** reveals the number of travel scenarios where a visa can be obtained on arrival at the destination country. Unlike the other two metrics, a change here does not necessarily reflect a positive or negative development outright, as it depends on what policy preceded a switch to offering visa-on-arrival facilities. For example, an increase in visa-on-arrival travel scenarios can mean that travellers from previously visa-free countries are now subject to a visa (a regressive change, and the percentage increases), while it can also mean that travellers from countries subject to a visa ahead of travel can now get a visa on arrival (a positive change, yet also leading to a percentage increase in this metric).

Conversely, as countries increase their visa-free offerings and others move from visa-required to visa-on-arrival, this may cancel out the respective percentage changes yet still represent significant progress in easing the travel experience. This year, the visa-on-arrival metric reveals a 12% drop from 711 to 585 travel scenarios where a visa is available on arrival, representing 20% of the total. Read together with the first and third metric below, this is a negative development compared to 2024, as it results from a significant net increase over the past year in visa-required travel scenarios.

The **third metric** measures country-to-country travel scenarios where a visa must still be obtained ahead of travel, be it through a traditional paper-based application process or an e-Visa that is obtained digitally. The key criterion here is whether the travel authorisation must be obtained before embarking on travel. While a digital online process is a significant improvement over in-person applications, the AVOI methodology does not distinguish between the different ways of obtaining a visa ahead of travel; traditional and e-Visa processes are both treated as a visa ahead of travel. But, as the section on e-Visa evolution reveals, there are now more e-Visa options than ever before, which means that the ease with which Africans can travel between countries supported by digital progress is in fact greater than is nominally indicated by this metric. In other words, a straightforward digital process is far more advantageous to a prospective traveller than obtaining a traditional, mostly paper-based visa that involves a visit to consular offices. Over the past year, the visa-required score has increased from 47% in 2024 to 51% in 2025, albeit still below its starting point of 55% in 2016. A visa or visa-equivalent ahead of travel is now required in 1,463 travel scenarios, significantly up from 1,348 in 2024.

### Visa openness in Africa, 2016–2025



\*Intra-Africa travel refers to travel by African citizens between African countries.

NOTE: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

# VISA OPENNESS IN AFRICA: Regional Economic Communities



# Freeing the movement of people within Africa's regions

As Africa integrates across diverse political, business, cultural and social landscapes, its Regional Economic Communities (RECs) continue to lead as enablers of the free movement of persons. For many countries, the more familiar regional environment helps encourage more liberal visa policies, but as the analysis below illustrates, this is not the case in all RECs.

The AU recognises eight RECs:



Regional integration creates bigger markets by cutting intra-regional tariffs, reducing non-tariff barriers and facilitating trade through more efficient transportation routes and border formalities, including One Stop Border Post facilities. This can provide fertile ground for regional value chains to develop and flourish on the back of more efficient and integrated markets. It also drives and benefits from greater policy cohesion among Member States, can facilitate coordinated responses to external shocks and natural disasters, and encourages cooperation on joint public health initiatives.

Most RECs have adopted treaties to progressively enable their citizens to enter, establish and reside in each other's countries. Implementation is at varying stages, with some having elevated to use of common passports, such as in East and West Africa. Where adoption has succeeded, visa openness enables high levels of regional mobility, and the mutual trust underpinning this cooperation helps to stabilize complex times when countries tighten their hitherto progressive visa policies.

## Tracking average REC scores

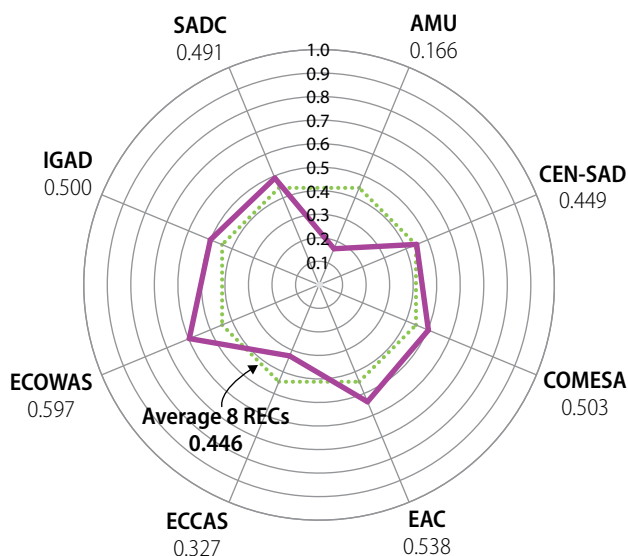
Tracking visa openness in the AU's eight recognised RECs provides insights into their overall progress within the broader continental context and also reveals how RECs are faring within their own regional initiatives. For this, the AVOI measures regional visa openness in two ways:

- First, AVOI measures average visa openness, which is calculated by combining each Member State's individual score within that REC and dividing by the number of members. This provides insights into regional attitudes towards easing the movement of people more broadly, and in this respect, offers a reflection on visa openness trends over time.
- Second, as shown in the next section, AVOI also measures regional visa reciprocity, which gauges the extent to which visa policies are reciprocated among Member States within the defined regional group. Higher levels of reciprocity suggest policy congruence, without making a finding on whether this congruence is deliberate or coincidental. High levels of visa-free reciprocity are an expected outcome where regional protocols exist and have high levels of implementation.

**In 2025, four of the eight RECs achieved an average score above their 2024 score**, with IGAD, EAC, ECCAS, and COMESA, in descending order, having improved the most.

## Visa openness within RECs

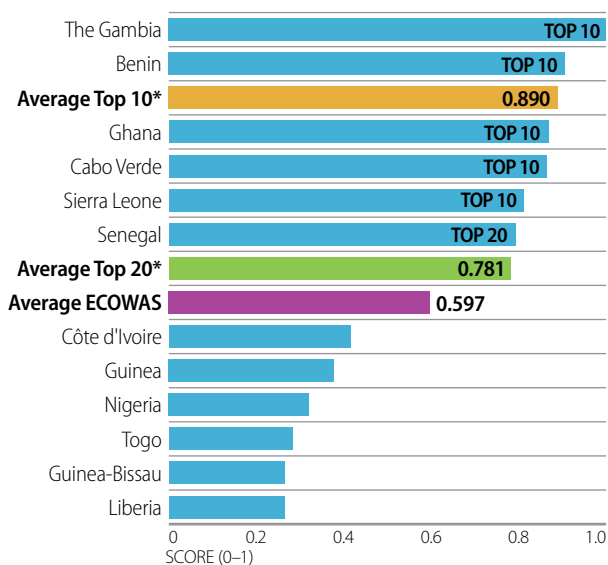
### 2025 Score comparison, RECs



### Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

ECOWAS countries' general visa openness is rooted in its solid regional integration track record. In 1979, a Protocol Relating to Free Movement of Persons, Residence and Establishment was adopted, requiring Member States to grant visa-free travel to each other's nationals. These intra-regional processes have a significant impact on the countries' overall performance, with several ECOWAS countries ranking highly on the index, and five featuring in the top ten.

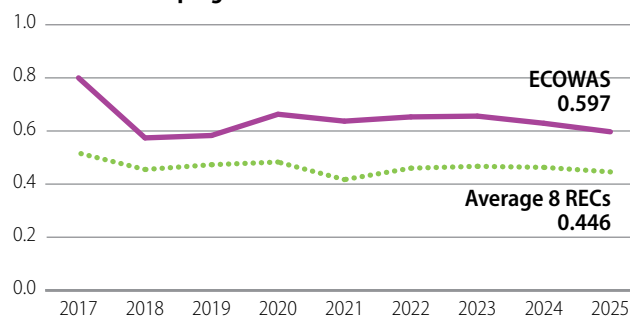
#### 2025 AVOI scores, ECOWAS



\*The average score of the top ranked countries on the 2025 AVOI.

ECOWAS retains the highest average score of all RECs (0.597), albeit significantly lower than its score in 2024 (0.629). This is also the regional group's lowest score since 2019, and was driven by significant policy updates by several of its Member States, as well as changes in its overall member configuration after three countries (Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger) withdrew their membership effective January 2025. These countries are no longer included in the AVOI scoring for ECOWAS.

#### 2017-2025 score progress ECOWAS

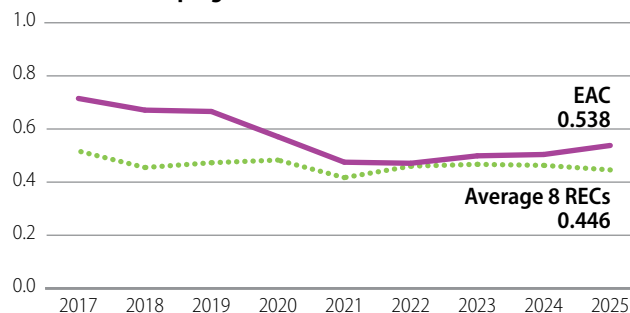


Of the remaining ECOWAS Member States, several visa-related policy changes are noted. Nigeria switched from visa-on-arrival to requiring a visa ahead of travel and now ranks 32<sup>nd</sup> (previously 6<sup>th</sup>). Benin dropped to 4<sup>th</sup> for its requirement for visas of citizens of Angola, Gabon, Mauritius, Morocco, and Namibia.

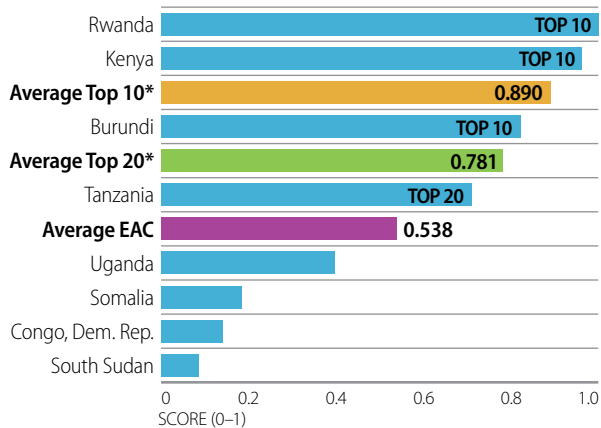
### East African Community (EAC)

In 2025, EAC further improved its AVOI score to become the REC with the second-highest visa openness average (0.540). Following several membership changes over the years, with Somalia and the DRC joining the bloc and being included in computations of the region's average score, a direct comparison with previous years is not possible. Despite its upward trajectory, visa-policy divergence by EAC countries towards the rest of the

#### 2017-2025 score progress EAC



## 2025 AVOI scores, EAC



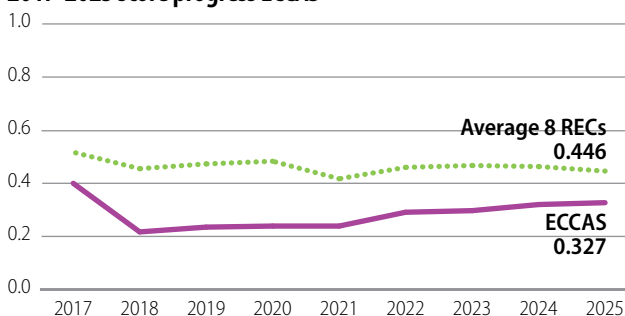
\*The average score of the top ranked countries on the 2025 AVOI.

continent remains significant. Rwanda and Kenya have achieved the highest levels of visa openness, in contrast to DRC, Somalia and South Sudan, which still rank in the lowest quartile of this year's AVOI. Kenya climbed 43 positions and is now almost completely visa-free, in contrast to Somalia, which in most travel scenarios now requires a visa ahead of travel and arrival (e-Visa), where previously visitors to the country could obtain a visa on arrival. This drops the country out of the top 20 ranking to 41<sup>st</sup> on the AVOI.

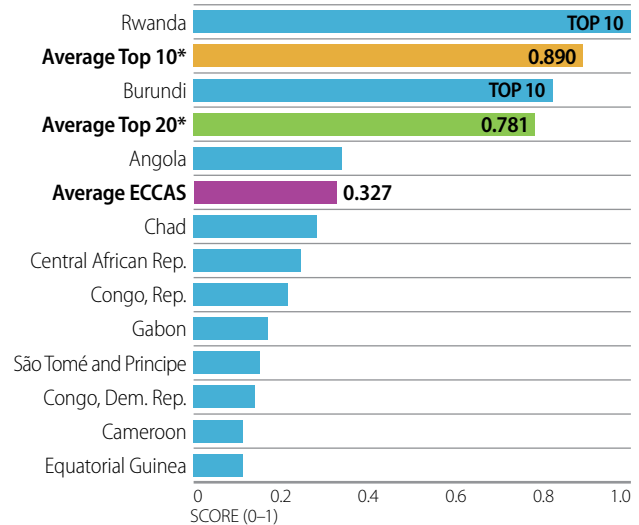
## Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)

ECCAS records a marginally higher average openness score in 2025 (0.327) compared to 2024 (0.320). Only two Member States updated their visa policies: Angola made one policy change, while Equatorial Guinea made four - citizens of Chad, Central African Republic, Republic of Congo, and Gabon now enter visa-free to all members of ECCAS. DRC now offers visa-free entry to citizens of Senegal. Notwithstanding these incremental changes, most ECCAS Member States maintain generally restrictive visa regimes and rank in the bottom quarter of the index. Burundi and Rwanda are the notable exceptions.

### 2017-2025 score progress ECCAS



## 2025 AVOI scores, ECCAS

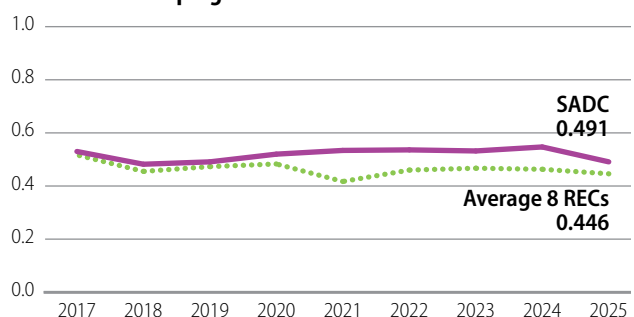


\*The average score of the top ranked countries on the 2025 AVOI.

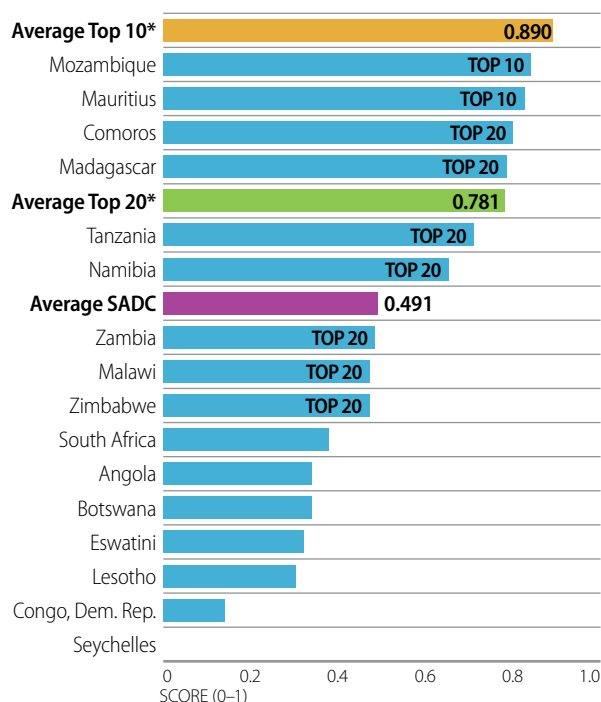
## Southern African Development Community (SADC)

SADC's average score declined in 2025 (to 0.491), and the region now ranks 5<sup>th</sup> amongst the eight RECs. While the current average score is on a par with 2019, this year's lower score is driven primarily by the lower rating attributed to Seychelles (see discussion on Seychelles, page 16, and the section on ETAs, page 19). Several other Member States improved their national score, implementing policy changes that impact 23 travel scenarios, 20 of which resulted in improved visa openness (mostly a combination of new visa-on-arrival and visa-free scenarios).

### 2017-2025 score progress SADC



## 2025 AVOI scores, SADC



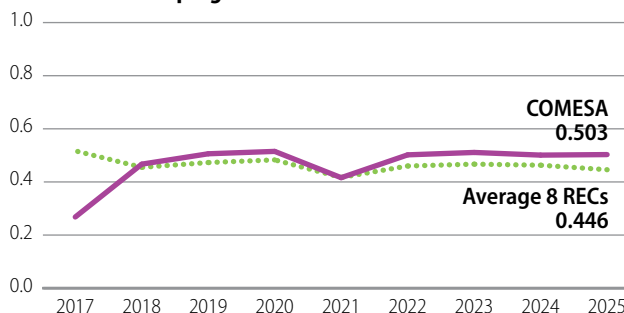
\*The average score of the top ranked countries on the 2025 AVOI.

Within SADC, three countries stand out. Mozambique now offers visa-free access to citizens of seven countries that previously required a visa on arrival. As a result, it becomes the 7<sup>th</sup> most open country on the index and the highest SADC-ranked country. Tanzania has made seven policy changes with citizens from three countries now requiring a visa to enter, while those of another four countries now qualify for visa-free entry, resulting in a small overall improvement in Tanzania's ranking (17<sup>th</sup>). Zambia has gained five places and is now a top-20 country, with citizens from six countries gaining visa-free status (from both visa-on-arrival and visa-required countries previously). Botswana (29<sup>th</sup>) now offers citizens of Algeria visa-free entry, while entry to DRC (46<sup>th</sup>) becomes visa-free for travellers from Senegal.

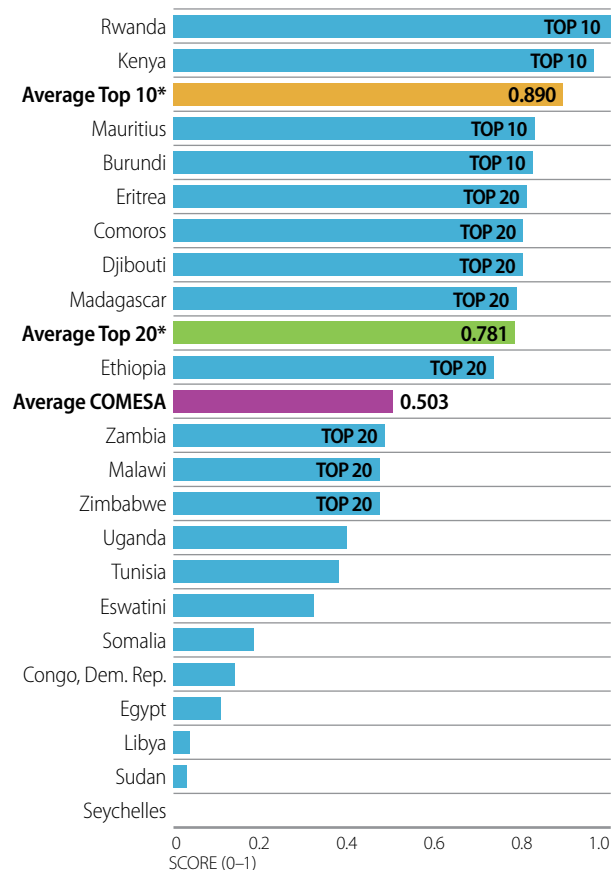
## Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)

COMESA is the second largest REC with 21 Member States. Its 2025 average score (0.504) is slightly higher than 2024 (0.501). Notwithstanding the relatively small net increase, closer analysis reveals significant momentum towards visa openness by several of its Member States. While Seychelles' ETA lowers the regional average, over 100 travel scenarios involving other COMESA countries have resulted in a significant number of individual ranking increases. Two countries stand out for jumping in ranking: Kenya and Eritrea, now in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> place respectively, due to Kenya's ETA waiver and Eritrea's switch from visa-required to visa-on-arrival.

## 2017-2025 score progress COMESA



## 2025 AVOI scores, COMESA

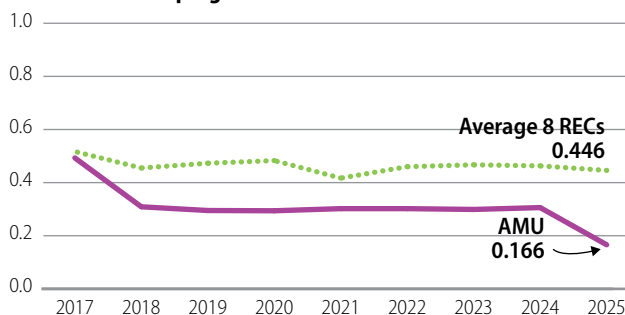


\*The average score of the top ranked countries on the 2025 AVOI.

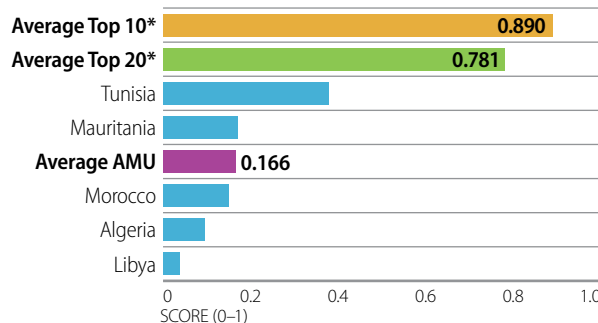
## Arab Mahgreb Union (AMU)

In 2025, average visa openness in AMU fell to its lowest level since the first AVOI index in 2016. The decline is the largest of any region, leaving AMU with an average score of 0.166, which is considerably lower than the next lowest-placed REC, ECCAS (0.327). In 2025, three of AMU's five Member States regressed on visa openness, with Mauritania implementing 45 changes, with its general policy moving from visa on arrival to visa required ahead of travel, albeit with citizens of Chad now receiving visa-free status. Morocco made eight changes whereby citizens from the eight currently visa-free countries require an ETA ahead of travel, however this measure is of a temporary nature (September 2025 to January 2026) and falls outside the AVOI data collection period. Algeria and Tunisia each made one change (in both instances, from visa-free to visa-required, applicable towards citizens of Morocco and Benin respectively), while Libya remained unchanged but already applies a visa-required policy from all but the citizens of two African countries (Algeria and Tunisia).

### 2017-2025 score progress AMU



### 2025 AVOI scores, AMU

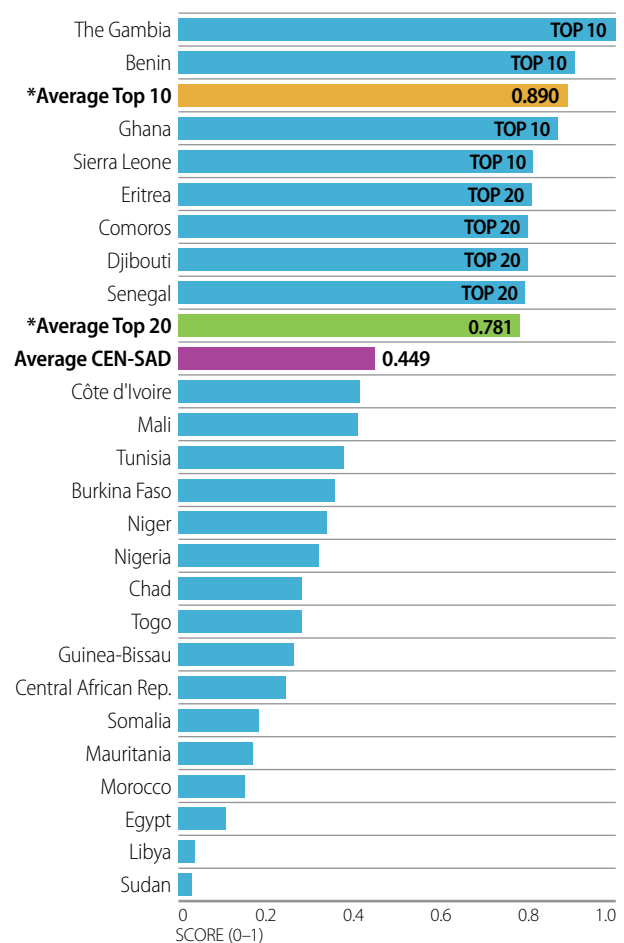


\*The average score of the top ranked countries on the 2025 AVOI.

## Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD)

CEN-SAD, scoring 0.449, comprises 24 Member States cutting across North, East, West, and Central Africa. Its members are also part of several other RECs, which exposes them to several different REC initiatives on the free movement of people, each with different levels of implementation. This appears to be reflected in CEN-SAD members' visa policies, which range from open and flexible (e.g. The Gambia) to fully or predominantly restrictive (e.g. Egypt, Libya, Sudan).

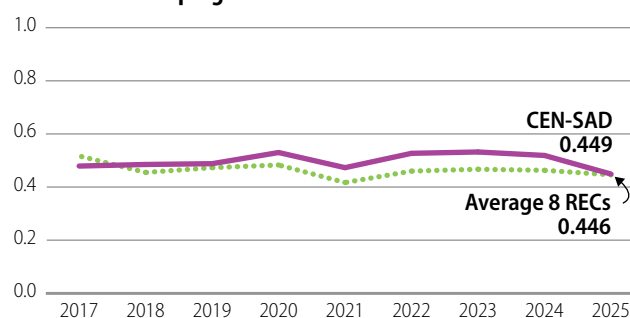
### 2025 AVOI scores, CEN-SAD



\*The average score of the top ranked countries on the 2025 AVOI.

Compared to 2024, the region scores lower, recording its lowest average AVOI score since the first edition. Over 180 country-to-country travel scenarios are affected by Member States' updated visa policies. While 50 of these involve a positive change towards a more liberal visa regime, the rest can be considered more restrictive. In terms of positive changes, Eritrea's change to a visa-on-arrival policy (affecting citizens of 48 countries) accounts for the bulk of CEN-SAD member's policy changes that ease intra-Africa travel. Of countries tightening visa requirements, Guinea-Bissau and Mauritania made policy changes that significantly lowered their regional scores. However, both countries' liberal visa policies towards ECOWAS Members remain intact. Somalia slips 24 positions on the AVOI, making 41 changes from visa-on-arrival to visa-required ahead of travel.

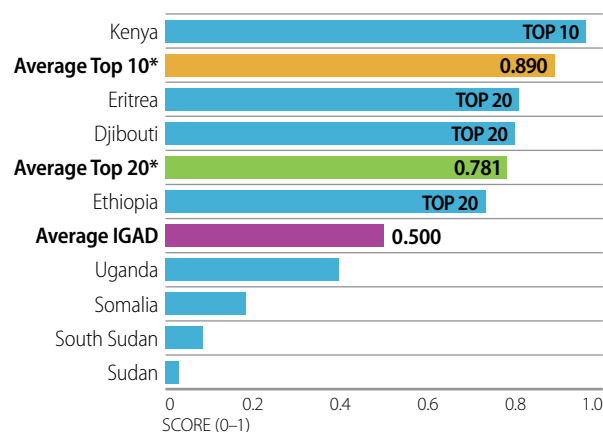
### 2017-2025 score progress CEN-SAD



## Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)

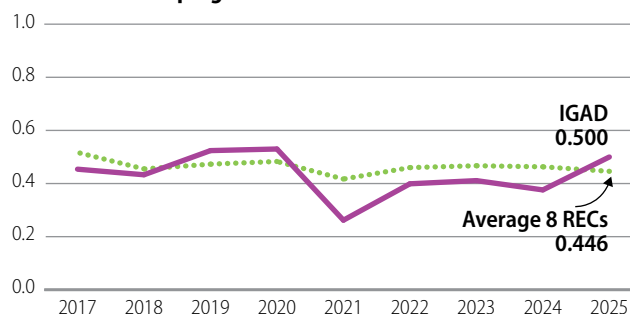
IGAD (0.502) records the largest average increase (+0.126) of all eight RECs and has now reached its highest score since 2020. Three of its eight Member States have collectively made policy changes that affect African citizens in 135 travel scenarios relating to travel to an IGAD member state. Kenya stands out, as does Eritrea, for reasons shared earlier.

### 2025 AVOI scores, IGAD



\*The average score of the top ranked countries on the 2025 AVOI.

### 2017-2025 score progress IGAD



**CASE STUDY:**

## Reciprocity and Free Movement in Africa: A double-edged sword?

Reciprocity involves countries aligning their visa regimes towards one another. Where reciprocity is used pragmatically, mobility rises, but where countries add visa restrictions in response to others' actions or wait for other countries to move first, the easing of movement stalls.

### **Unilateral openness can deliver real gains even without necessarily achieving immediate reciprocity.**

Two key elements explain the most positive change. The first is political leadership, where countries frame openness as an economic strategy rather than a concession to unlock reforms. Rwanda's decision to grant visa-free entry to all African nationals reflects an explicit plan to position the country as a regional business, tourism, and conference hub. Similarly, Benin, Kenya and The Gambia pursue investment and incoming tourism, while creating diplomatic goodwill with their progressive stances on visa openness. Unilateral openness can deliver real gains even without necessarily achieving immediate reciprocity.

The second are institutional frameworks, where clear and binding legal agreements alongside implementation mechanisms translate into real mobility rights. On this, ECOWAS stands out, having followed a determined approach since 1979 on rights of entry, residence, and establishment. In this context, anchoring visa-free travel with enforceable rules has led to high levels of reciprocity. The EAC's treaty provisions commit governments to free movement but rely on domestic follow-through. SADC's 2005 movement protocol has yet to enter into force, and the AU Free Movement Protocol still awaits the requisite number of ratifications. In these settings, progress on freeing the movement of people often depends on bilateral deals or unilateral visa policy, which can be uneven and reversible, especially when not grounded in a regional agreement.

Still, several constraints persist. Rigid reciprocity can trap countries in diplomatic stalemates, where openness is extended but not returned, and reforms face domestic criticism and may retreat to more restrictive policies. Security and political sensitivities, including around human trafficking, irregular migration and economic asymmetries, where wealthier countries fear being inundated by migrants from poorer states, may

push governments towards more restrictive policies. Lastly, institutional weaknesses, such as outdated immigration laws, a lack of public awareness and poor inter-agency coordination can mean that even well-intended commitments sometimes fail in practice. The outcomes to the application of visa reciprocity mirror this complexity.

Where reciprocity is managed pragmatically and paired with facilitation tools that enhance border processes, mobility and commerce can respond quickly, sometimes dramatically. Tourism receipts rise, business exchanges deepen, and political ties strengthen, while regional collaboration on visa-free regimes or common single tourist visas can yield returns. For example, when Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda introduced a single tourist visa that also allowed travel with national identity cards, Rwanda recorded a 17% increase in tourist arrivals within one year and a 50% increase in cross-border trade with its neighbours. In other regions where reciprocity is uneven, the benefits of unilateral openness are limited and the promise of free movement is under-achieved.

### **...the future of reciprocity will hinge on whether States can move ... toward a collective and shared understanding of mobility as a regional public good.**

Looking ahead, the future of reciprocity will hinge on whether States can move beyond narrow, transactional bargaining toward a collective and shared understanding of mobility as a regional public good. That shift implies: (1) Consolidating binding frameworks where feasible, such as ratifying the AU's Free Movement Protocol, and fully operationalizing REC regimes with respect to movement of person protocols; (2) investing in technological innovation that supports mobility and reduces visa-related barriers, and; (3) building coalitions of the willing that liberalise together and demonstrate benefits that draw in reluctant states and late adopters.

With sufficient political will and capable institutions, along with smart technology, openness and security can reinforce each other and turn the promise of continental mobility into an everyday reality.

## Reciprocity within RECs

Regional reciprocity measures the alignment of visa regimes by Member States of a REC. High levels of reciprocity mean there is a high degree of alignment in how Member States apply visa policies to each other, on a reciprocal basis. Every Member State's policy with respect to every other Member State of the REC is counted, and policy alignment is achieved whenever the same policies are mutually in place by two countries. The focus here is therefore on intra-regional consistency rather than measuring visa openness per se, with a high score indicating alignment, and a low score misalignment.

**A high score in the visa-free reciprocity metric... implies that countries are generally open to arrivals of each other's nationals and permit easy access, without the need for a visa.**

AVOI focuses on a key aspect of reciprocity, namely how members of a REC extend visa-free privileges to one another on a reciprocal basis and have in this way established 'positive reciprocity'. A high score in the visa-free reciprocity metric suggests a high degree of harmonisation of visa-free policies within a REC. This then implies that countries are generally open to arrivals of each other's nationals and permit easy access, without the need for a visa. High scores tend to be due to well-established regional protocols relating to the movement of persons, along with high levels of implementation, but may also be driven by countries' understanding of the economic and social benefits that may follow from such policies. Since regions with high visa-free reciprocity scores also tend to be well integrated economically, they often thrive in other developmental indicators too.

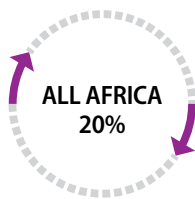
On the other hand, low visa-free reciprocity scores suggest that a region has not fully implemented wider initiatives to ease the movement of the region's citizens across its national borders, and that countries that are more open towards the citizens of neighbouring countries do so based on their national interests. At other times, notwithstanding a regional protocol, specific issues between neighbours, or a country's internal issues and processes, can result in poor or delayed implementation. This affects regional reciprocity openness scores while perpetuating barriers to the movement of persons.

Visa-free reciprocity at a continental level has shown a small improvement during 2025, from 20.3% to 20.5%. This can be construed as an indicator of higher levels of visa-free policy alignment and some progress on regional initiatives to free the movement of persons. Closer scrutiny of the visa policies of all Africa's countries, particularly within AU RECs, suggests that a relatively small number of mostly unilateral, national policy changes have driven this year's slightly higher visa-free reciprocity score. In a select number of cases, individual countries' imposition of visa formalities ahead of travel has been reciprocated by countries whose citizens have been affected by such a move, which has reduced the magnitude of improvements in visa-free reciprocity. There has, however, been a significant increase in the number of travel scenarios where countries now impose a visa on a reciprocal basis, thus aligning their restrictive policies. This visa-required policy alignment has increased from 27.9% in 2024 to 33.2% in 2025.

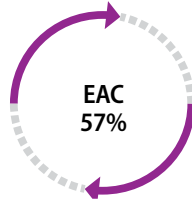
**[There are] many untapped opportunities for enhanced visa openness performance, where countries could align their own visa policies... to the more liberal policies that other countries offer their citizens in return.**

In contrast, in 41.4% of all scenarios, visa policies remain misaligned. This suggests many untapped opportunities for enhanced visa openness performance, where countries could align their own visa policies at a bilateral or regional level to the more liberal policies that other countries offer their citizens in return. Such incremental steps would have a significant overall positive impact on visa openness. Countries that are still reluctant to make major reforms can target bilateral changes as a priority.

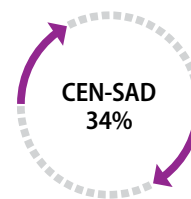
## Key observations on regional visa-free reciprocity



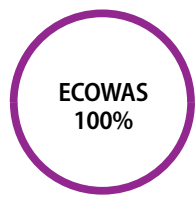
Overall, **visa-free reciprocity across Africa** has inched upwards slightly over 2025. There have, however, been several incremental changes within some RECs.



**EAC (57%)** moves to third position with respect to visa-free reciprocity, after Tanzania provided citizens of DRC with visa-free access. Kenya had, in 2024, already waived ETA requirements towards most EAC Member States, meaning its latest policy change does not affect the intra-regional score significantly.



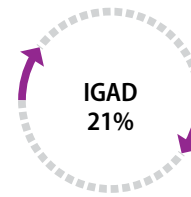
**CEN-SAD's (34%)** regional visa-free reciprocity remains unchanged from last year.



**ECOWAS (100%)** becomes the first region to apply visa-free access on a fully reciprocal basis, after Guinea-Bissau lifted visa formalities on citizens of São Tomé and Príncipe (2024: 99%).



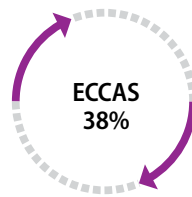
**SADC (52%)** scores lower than it did in 2024 (60%) after considering the impact of Seychelles' ETA, while an expansion of visa-free access by Mozambique and Zambia towards several other SADC States has yet to be reciprocated.



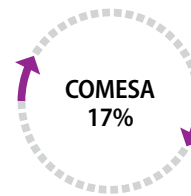
**IGAD (21%)** achieves a significant increase in its visa-free reciprocity metric this year (2024: 14%), driven entirely by Kenya's updated visa-free policies. However, visa-free reciprocity remains at a low level, ahead only of COMESA.



**AMU (60%)** has declined in its visa-free reciprocity score (2024: 70%) yet still maintains the second highest level among the RECs. As the smallest REC in terms of number of Member States, individual changes have a significant impact on the score. In this instance, the only change relates to Algeria implementing a visa requirement towards citizens of Morocco.



**ECCAS (38%)** shows a significant improvement over last year (2024: 33%), due mainly to visa-free changes implemented by Equatorial Guinea.



**COMESA (17%)**, with an unchanged score over 2024, is now the lowest ranked REC in terms of Member States extending visa-free privileges to each other on a reciprocal basis.

## Charting visa policy reciprocity

The charts on visa reciprocity in this section depict the extent to which the three types of visa policies measured by the AVOI (visa-free, visa-on-arrival, and visa-before-travel) are reciprocated among the member states of the eight AU-recognised RECs. The charts rank countries in descending order of reciprocal visa openness: at the top are those countries whose visa-free policies are reciprocated the most by others within the REC.

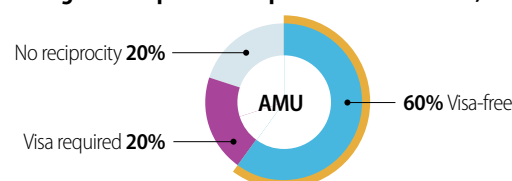
Countries' rankings in the reciprocity charts do not relate to countries' rankings on the AVOI. Neither do they necessarily reflect the average visa openness of each country in the REC. Instead, they show the extent to which countries' visa policies—whether liberal or restrictive—are reciprocated by the other members of their REC.

If a country ranks highly on the AVOI but experiences low visa-free reciprocity within its REC, the cause may be that its REC has not developed a structure for harmonising its members' visa policies, or that the country is not implementing agreed policy. It could also be that the country's fellow REC members do not reciprocate the country's visa-open stance.

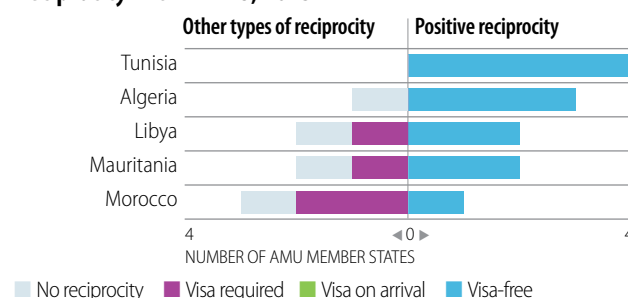
## Arab Maghreb Union (AMU)

AMU's founding treaty sets out, as one of its core objectives, for its Member States to “*work for the progressive realization of the free movement of persons, services, goods and capital*”. Implementation has been limited, and intra-Maghreb travel remains restrictive. Only half of intra-regional travel currently offers visa-free terms, with Algeria and Tunisia's largely visa-free policies towards other AMU Member States being reciprocated by three of the four remaining Member States.

### Percentage of visa policies reciprocated within AMU, 2025



### Reciprocity within AMU, 2025

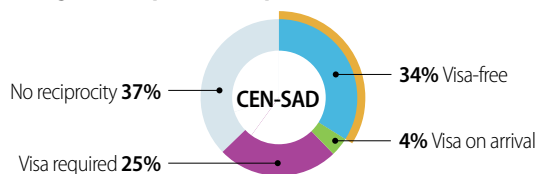


Morocco meanwhile has introduced a temporary requirement for an ETA, applicable to eight otherwise visa-free countries, including fellow AMU Member States Algeria and Tunisia. This suspends visa-free travel and is linked to the country's imminent hosting of the 2025 African Cup of Nations football tournament. As its introduction falls outside of the data collection window and is of a temporary nature, it has no impact on the regional score. Yet, it is an example of movement restrictions, enabled through the application of ETA requirements.

## Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD)

Visa-free reciprocity within CEN-SAD remains unchanged at 33% in 2025. Seen in the context of higher levels of visa-required reciprocity, rising from 18% to 25%, and a halving to 4% for visa-on-arrival reciprocity, this suggests an overall reduction in the ease of movement between Member States as a whole. However, closer scrutiny reveals that there have been a few country-specific changes relating to reciprocity, albeit not sufficient to change the region's overall score, while some changes have cancelled out their overall impact (for example, Benin scores slightly lower while Chad and Mauritania advance slightly on their reciprocity scores). Individual (single country) policy tightening is noted from Benin (towards Algeria and Morocco) and Tunisia (towards Benin), reducing the regional reciprocity score.

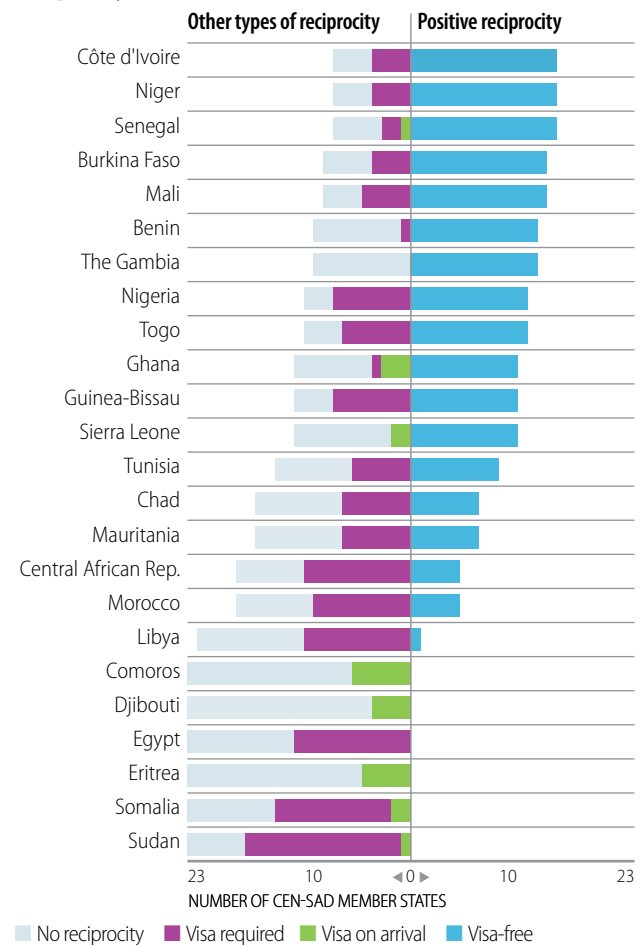
### Percentage of visa policies reciprocated within CEN-SAD, 2025



The twelve countries that score highest on intra-regional visa-free reciprocity are all members or former members of ECOWAS. Countries that ended their membership of the regional bloc have left their liberal visa policies towards ECOWAS countries unchanged, which means that there has also been no negative impact on the visa-free reciprocity score for CEN-SAD.

Currently, nine of the 24 CEN-SAD countries allow visa-free entry on a bilateral basis to citizens of at least half of the remaining Member States, with visa-free reciprocity involving 15 countries representing the highest scores (achieved by Côte d'Ivoire, Niger and Senegal). At the other end of the spectrum, six countries score zero with respect to regional CEN-SAD visa-free reciprocity: Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Somalia and Sudan. Easing of visa restrictions by these countries would significantly improve regional visa openness, and with that, the regional visa-free reciprocity score.

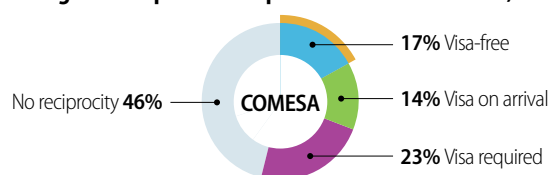
### Reciprocity within CEN-SAD, 2025



## Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)

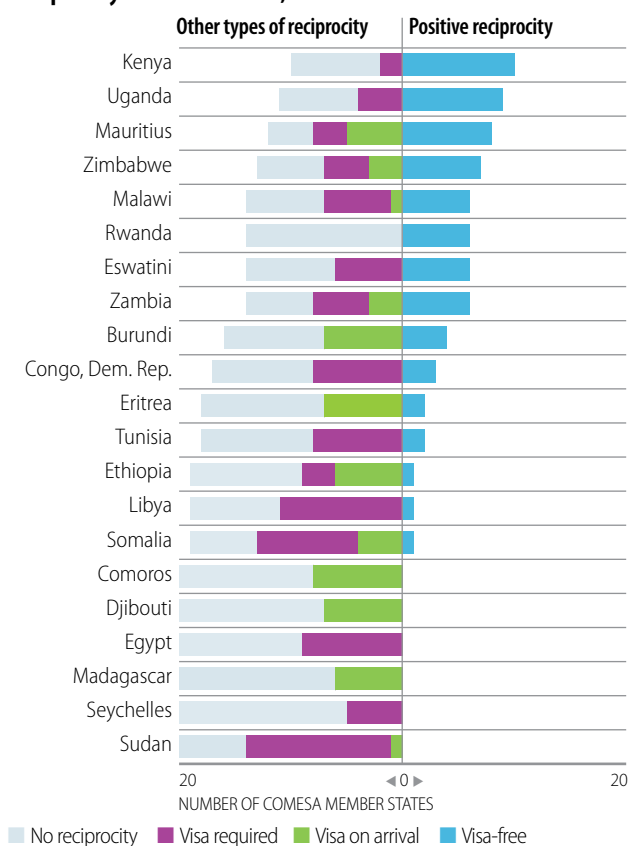
COMESA lags on intra-regional reciprocal visa openness and of all the RECs, scores the lowest in this metric. Visa-free reciprocity remains unchanged from 2024 (17%) and is lower than in 2023 (20%). Visa-free reciprocity also remains at lower levels than the alignment score pertaining to visa-required policies (22%). In other words, within COMESA, visa-required consistency exceeds common approaches to visa-free policies. And in 47% of all intra-regional travel scenarios, countries' visa policies remain non-aligned, such as when one COMESA country grants visa-free access - for example, Kenya towards citizens of Egypt, whilst Egypt still requires citizens of Kenya to obtain a visa ahead of travel. Or Zimbabwe, which requires a visa ahead of travel from citizens of Djibouti, despite offering visa-on-arrival facilities to many other COMESA citizens, while Djibouti offers Zimbabweans a visa on arrival.

## Percentage of visa policies reciprocated within COMESA, 2025



While COMESA's *Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons, Labour, Services, the Right of Establishment and Residence* - adopted in 1998 - aims to substantially expand movement of persons within the region, many countries have yet to ratify the treaty. A *Protocol on the Gradual Relaxation and Eventual Elimination of Visa Requirements*, adopted in 1984, acknowledges that smaller groups of Member States can maintain more liberal visa policies amongst themselves and encourages this, as it serves as a potential stepping stone towards broader or region-wide approaches to a more open visa regime.<sup>10</sup> Late in 2024, the then incoming COMESA Chair, Burundi, is reported to have announced that the country will provide visa-free access to the remaining COMESA Member States.<sup>11</sup> This policy was not yet reflected in the IATA database during the AVOI data collection period (July-August 2025), which still shows visa-on-arrival applicable to most COMESA citizens.

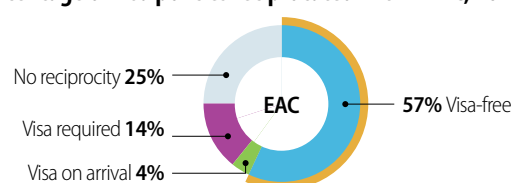
## Reciprocity within COMESA, 2025



## East African Community (EAC)

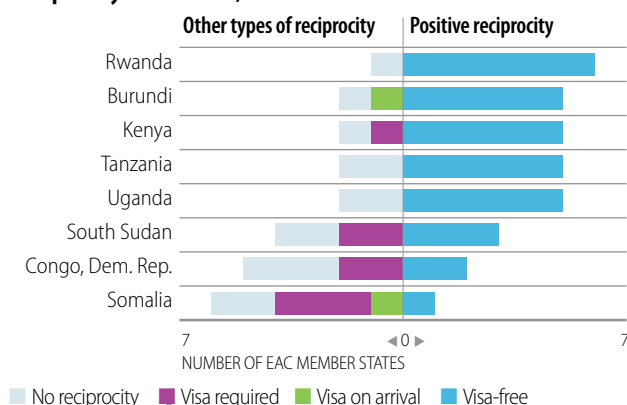
Visa-free reciprocity within EAC is at 57% (2024: 54%), the second highest of the RECs and slightly up from last year. This incremental change is due to Kenya's move to a visa-free regime, albeit that all EAC partner states apart from Somalia already qualified for preferential access. Free movement of persons within EAC is well grounded in the region's founding objectives and policies, including the *Treaty Establishing the EAC* (Article 104) and the *Protocol on the Establishment of the EAC Common Market* (in Article 5).

## Percentage of visa policies reciprocated within EAC, 2025



As shown in the reciprocity chart below, five countries have achieved high levels of visa-free reciprocity within the region, namely the three founding members, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, as well as Rwanda and Burundi who joined in 2007. DRC and Somalia, and to a lesser extent South Sudan, each have yet to align their visa regimes more broadly with the region's visa-free aspirations (DRC and Somalia currently reciprocate visa-free status with only two and one other member states respectively). Somalia granted one country visa-free status during 2025 (Rwanda) and changed its visa-on-arrival policies in favour of a visa-required for most countries despite, for example, EAC members Kenya and Tanzania granting citizens of Somalia visa-free status. Similarly, the DRC still requires a visa ahead of travel from citizens of Uganda and offers a visa-on-arrival to citizens of Kenya and Tanzania, whereas each of these countries grant DRC citizens visa-free access. In the future, changes by DRC and Somalia would result in a significant increase in the region's overall visa-free reciprocity score, ease intra-regional travel and further cement the EAC's position as having the second highest level of policy alignment on this important integration metric. Intra-regional travel is further enhanced through an optional EAC passport, while Kenya, Rwanda and Uganda also recognise each other's national identity documentation for the purposes of travel.<sup>12</sup>

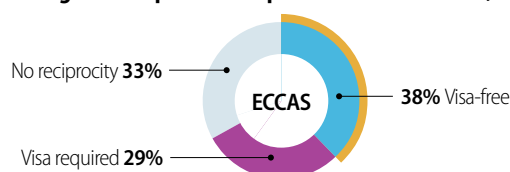
## Reciprocity within EAC, 2025



## Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)

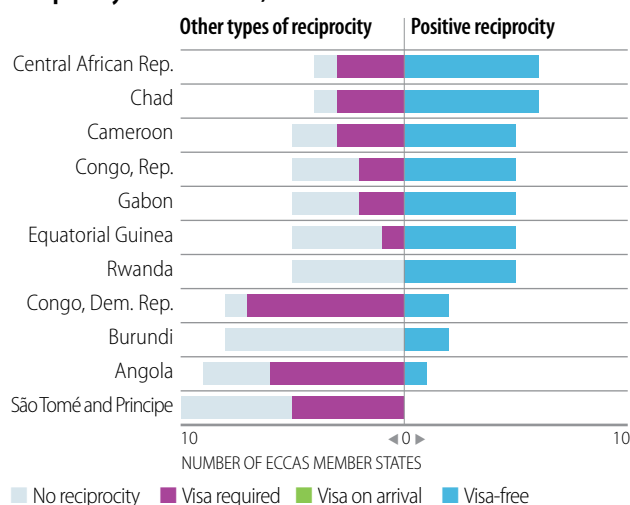
ECCAS is one of four RECs where visa-free access on a reciprocal basis applies to fewer than half of the intra-regional travel scenarios (38%). However, this represents an improvement over last year (2024: 33%). These changes are mainly driven by Equatorial Guinea's significantly more liberal visa policy with respect to four other ECCAS Member States. While the treaty establishing ECCAS, as a founding principle, seeks the *'progressive abolition between Member States of obstacles to the free movement of persons, goods, services and capital and to the right of establishment'*, practical implementation has been mainly within the CEMAC bloc, comprising Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon. Following Equatorial Guinea's policy changes, CEMAC countries within ECCAS now fully reciprocate visa-free access, an important sub-regional milestone on easing the movement of persons and supporting economic and monetary integration.

## Percentage of visa policies reciprocated within ECCAS, 2025



Among ECCAS, three countries (Angola, DRC, and São Tomé and Príncipe) apply the most restrictive visa policies towards citizens of other members, with the latter two applying seven visa-required (ahead of travel) policies each, and Angola eight. While neither are members of CEMAC, the regional visa-free reciprocity score would

## Reciprocity within ECCAS, 2025

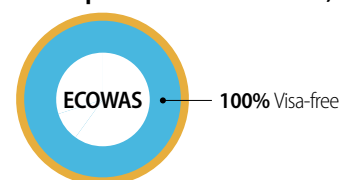


increase substantially if changes leading to visa-free entry to citizens of fellow ECCAS countries more broadly were to be implemented. Although Burundi's visa policies are the least-aligned with its regional ECCAS peers, offering a visa on arrival in all but two scenarios (visa-free access for citizens of Rwanda and DRC), it is now the second-highest ranked ECCAS member state on the index and a new entrant in the top 10 on the AVOI overall.

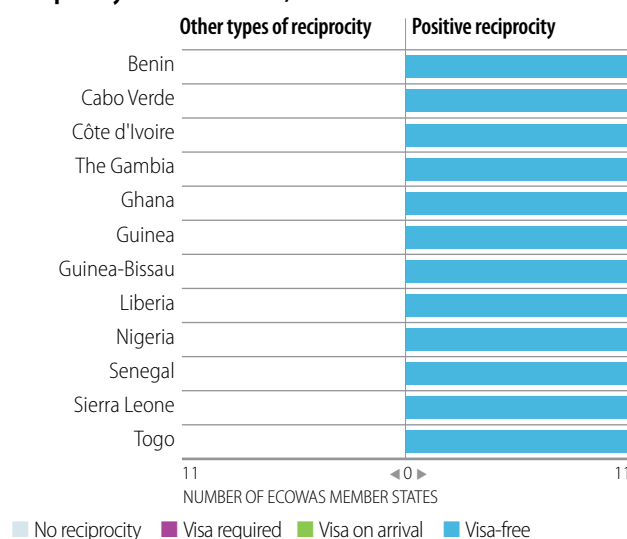
## Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

ECOWAS Member States fully reciprocate visa-free access to citizens of every other Member State. With one policy change in 2025 (Guinea-Bissau switching from a visa-on-arrival towards citizens of São Tomé and Príncipe to visa-free status), the region has a perfect 100% reciprocity score. This speaks to the high level of policy coordination within ECOWAS, with a common approach to issues around migration having progressively removed obstacles to the free movement of its citizens. Several initiatives ease cross-border processes, including introduction of an ECOWAS passport (since 2000) and the adoption in 2014 of a regional ID (ECOWAS National Biometric Identity Card - ENBIC).<sup>13</sup>

## Percentage of visa policies reciprocated within ECOWAS, 2025



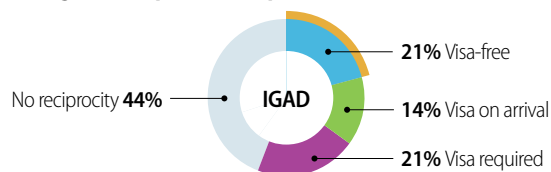
## Reciprocity within ECOWAS, 2025



## Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)

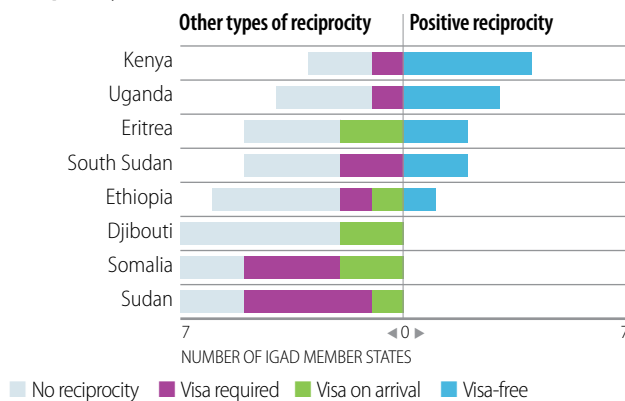
While IGAD's average visa openness score has increased significantly over the past year, it continues to lag behind other RECs on reciprocal intra-regional visa openness. This year, 21% of intra-regional travel scenarios are visa-free on a reciprocal basis, up from 14% in 2024 and higher than at any other point since the first edition. This improvement is driven by Kenya's more liberal policies vis-a-vis the continent more broadly. However, Eritrea and Somalia have also introduced visa-on-arrival facilities for citizens of three other IGAD Member States.

## Percentage of visa policies reciprocated within IGAD, 2025



These incremental changes affect the movement of persons and also livestock, which is crucial for the region. The IGAD Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons was adopted in 2021, signed by six Member States, but is yet to enter into force. The IGAD Regional Consultative Process on Migration (IGAD-RCP) is aimed at facilitating coordination on border and migration policies and achieving higher levels of alignment. Collaboration on seasonal cross-border movement of pastoralists and livestock through the IGAD Protocol on Transhumance, also adopted in 2021, aims to prevent conflict and increase regional resilience.

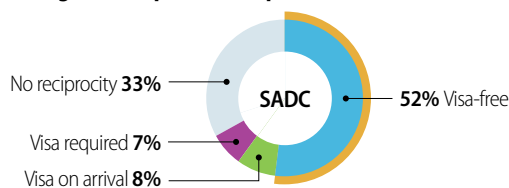
### Reciprocity within IGAD, 2025



### Southern African Development Community (SADC)

Notwithstanding the lower regional average, SADC continues to demonstrate significant levels of policy harmonisation with respect to intra-regional visa openness. With a score of 52% (2024: 60%), it sits in 3<sup>rd</sup> place. Considering the negative impact of the Seychelles ETA on the overall regional visa-free reciprocity score, this masks the fact that several incremental changes increase regional reciprocity on a bilateral basis. Mozambique now offers citizens of fellow SADC Member States Lesotho, Namibia and Seychelles visa-free access, but only Namibia offers the same in return. Zambia has now advanced to visa-free status for citizens of Comoros and Madagascar, even though both countries still require a visa on arrival for Zambians.

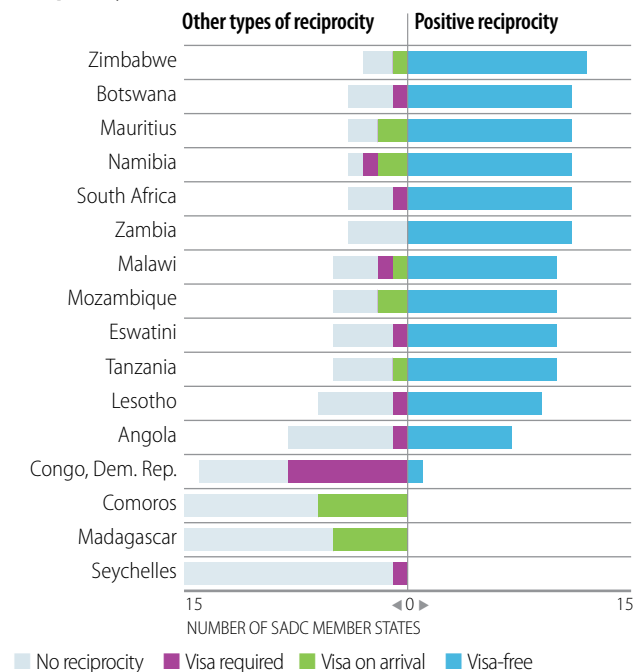
### Percentage of visa policies reciprocated within SADC, 2025



SADC members collaborate politically and bilaterally. For example, an agreement exists between Botswana and Namibia recognising their respective national identity documents for border crossings. These enhance real-world openness and set examples for wider easing of cross-border formalities.

Collaboration on a common regional visa (the 'KAZA univisa', covering Zambia and Zimbabwe, including limited access to Botswana<sup>14</sup>) aims to ease cross-border movement for tourists but also reflects a growing realisation of the value of facilitating cross-border travel.

### Reciprocity within SADC, 2025



# VISA OPENNESS IN AFRICA: The African Continental Free Trade Area



# From treaty design to implementation



With a population of over 1.5 billion people, and making significant progress at deepening economic and social integration, Africa is a strong market for continental trade and investment.

The African Continental Free Trade

Area (AfCFTA), now ratified by 49 countries, aims to accelerate Africa's trade and integration agenda, and has largely transitioned from the design and negotiation phase to implementation and operationalisation. At least 25 countries have gazetted their provisional schedules of tariff concessions and are able to trade with each other under the AfCFTA preferential trade regime.

Notable milestones have been reached:

- The AfCFTA is a fully-fledged free trade area with its own **institutional architecture** in place.
- Enabling instruments that are key to the functionality of intra-African trade are finalized: The **e-Tariff Book**, a web-based resource providing businesses with essential tariff and rules of origin information; the **Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS)** – cross-border financial market infrastructure to enable payment transactions across Africa in local currency, with growing levels of adoption by commercial banks; and the **AfCFTA Adjustment Fund** to promote commercially viable investments that enable trade and promote diversification, recently making its first significant investment.<sup>15</sup>
- The **Guided Trade Initiative (GTI)** was successfully deployed. This is a pilot project that supported early commercially meaningful trade to help test the operational, institutional and legal policy environment of the AfCFTA.

Work continues to finalise rules of origin (specifically on textiles and clothing, and autos), and ratifications by Benin, Eritrea, Libya, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan remain outstanding. Work must also progress on implementing the AfCFTA's non-tariff agenda (trade facilitation issues, electronic certificates of origin, implementation of the services commitments, mutual recognition agreements on qualifications and standards and so on).

## The AfCFTA Protocol on Trade in Services: how the movement of people can support trade in services

The services sector plays a key role in Africa's economy and its regional integration endeavors, helping drive growth, productivity, employment, investment, and trade.<sup>16</sup> Sectors like transport, communication, finance and professional services such as legal and business services, are important facilitators of cross-border trade in goods. Services also determine how citizens of a country travel, and how investment flows. Trade in services is key for Africa's socioeconomic transformation - more efficient technologies, ports, transportation and logistics, financial and digital services all help enable better living standards, higher paying jobs and wider choices.

**People[s]... ability to provide services is impacted by [their] ability to move seamlessly across borders.**

People are central to the provision of many services. People provide expertise, remotely or in person. As business and trade develop, people are required to move across borders, whether to supply goods and services, or to install, train and offer after-sales support. The ability to provide services is affected by people's ability to move seamlessly across borders. Barriers to movement therefore not only have social consequences, but also economic impacts.

The AfCFTA Protocol on Trade in Services provides a legal framework covering four modes of services supply.<sup>17</sup> Below are the details:

- **Mode 1 - Cross border supply:** A service supplied from the territory of one State Party into the territory of any other State Party (e.g. an IT company providing a software consulting service to a client in another country). No cross-border movement of persons is required.
- **Mode 2 - Consumption abroad:** A service provided in the territory of one State Party to a service consumer of another State party (e.g. a student from one country attending university in another country).
- **Mode 3 - Commercial presence:** A service provided by a supplier of one State party through commercial presence in the territory of another State Party (e.g. a foreign hotel chain opening a tourist establishment in another country). Often this is complemented by the temporary presence of service suppliers (e.g. a manager from the foreign hotel chain may help establish and run the business in the foreign jurisdiction).
- **Mode 4 - Temporary presence of a natural person (service supplier) abroad:** A service supplier of one State party, through the presence of a natural person of a State Party in another State Party (e.g. an engineer from one country travelling to a client's construction site in another country).

The AfCFTA Protocol on Trade in Services links to the movement of persons insofar as it relates to commitments on the temporary presence of persons abroad who are involved in the consumption or supply of a service, and specifically, to Mode 2 (consumption abroad) and Mode 4 (temporary presence of natural persons). Links between Mode 3 and Mode 4 are often found to facilitate foreign investment in services sectors.

The AfCFTA Protocol on Trade in Services covers twelve sectors, five of which have been identified as priorities for initial liberalisation efforts: Financial, business, communications, transport, and tourism services. To the extent that States Parties make commitments in these sectors, they are available for access, subject to conditions contained in their schedules of specific commitments.

Forty-nine AU Member States submitted initial offers on services liberalisation, covering the five priority sectors. Twenty-four draft schedules of specific commitments have been adopted.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, studies to support the inclusion of additional sectors from the list of the twelve are in progress, in construction and engineering services, education, environmental and health services, as well as in recreational, cultural and sporting services.

While the trade in services protocol commits countries to progressive liberalisation of services, including the movement of persons, initial progress is still modest. There is need for more ambitious action, especially given that several RECs have similar commitments in comparable sectors.

## AU Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons

Free movement of people is a flagship project of the AU's Agenda 2063, which aims to remove restrictions on Africans' ability to travel, work, and live on the African continent.<sup>19</sup> The Protocol on Free Movement of Persons (PFMP) was adopted by AU Member States in January 2018 alongside the AfCFTA, and aims to progressively implement several core rights related to mobility:

- The right of entry;
- The right of residence; and
- The right of establishment.

The Protocol's initial focus is on the right of entry, relating to visa-free short stays. Mali, Niger, Rwanda, and São Tomé and Príncipe have ratified the Protocol, notwithstanding that 32 countries have signed it. This falls short of the 15 ratifications required for entry into force. The most recent ratification, by Niger, was in July 2019, more than six years ago.<sup>20</sup>

The low uptake in number of ratifications is a curious anomaly, given that its parallel agreement - the AfCFTA - is now in its operational phase. The general ideals of the PFMP are widely supported and symbolise continental unity.

The AU recognises RECs as building blocks of regional economic integration between members of individual regions and the wider African Economic Community,<sup>21</sup> and in terms of African mobility as providing important functional corridors for movement of people. RECs demonstrate how the benefits as well as some of the broader concerns around movement can be managed and implemented in practice. The PFMP remains an

important tool to complement the AfCFTA's ambitions on movement of goods, capital and services across African borders, adding the important mobility dimension that gives meaningful effect to the notion of Africa's economic and social integration. For this, the RECs will continue to be a meaningful, practical and realistic force in support of human mobility.

Migration is seen as politically sensitive - notwithstanding widely accepted benefits around easing the movement of persons alongside progressive extension of migration rights. Concerns over a perceived loss of sovereignty over border management processes and security concerns heighten political risk and, in some cases, fuel anti-immigrant sentiment. However, as was noted at a February 2025 AfDB/African Union High Level Dialogue on a Visa Free Africa which convened Ministers, Heads of RECs and key institutions on the margins of the African Union Summit, we must continue to advocate for visa free movement of Africans, and ensure that citizens across the continent, especially youth, are the main proponents of this call.<sup>22</sup>

## Single African Air Transport Market

The Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) is an AU Agenda 2063 flagship project to expand intra-African air connectivity through a single, liberalised air transport market across Africa. Measures that help deregulate the air transport market create a conducive environment for enhanced transnational competition, in line with the 1999 Yamoussoukro Decision (YD) on air-services liberalisation, which was operationalised through SAATM. Eligible airlines are being considered for additional traffic rights aimed at better connectivity, landing rights, flexible ownership rules, and harmonised safety and security standards.

Officially launched in 2018, SAATM has thirty-eight participating countries, representing more than 89% of intra-African air traffic. Of these, 23 AU Member States have signed a memorandum of implementation to remove any bilateral air services agreement restrictions not in compliance with the YD.

In February 2020, the Bank approved a US\$7 million grant for institutional support to implement SAATM. The project aims to enhance Africans' access to air travel by supporting the African Civil Aviation Commission (AFCAC) - the SAATM executive agency - in fulfilling its mandate. It also aims to ensure the sustainable development of air transport by enhancing the compliance of countries, airlines, and airports with safety, security, and environmental protection requirements of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

Project activities ended in December 2024, and its achievements include reinforcement of AFCAC through technical capacity, development of key regulatory texts on consumer protection and competition (in coordination with RECs and the AfCFTA Secretariat), advocacy for full implementation of SAATM, training of RECs and member countries on African air transport/economic regulations, and resolution of disputes between countries on traffic rights. Moreover, more than ten airlines and countries have been assisted to increase their safety and security levels.

On 14<sup>th</sup> November 2022, fifteen countries signed an agreement to launch a pilot project of the SAATM initiative through clusters of small groups of countries, promoting the benefits and addressing impediments to the implementation of SAATM. The multi-stakeholder approach is designed to facilitate a harmonised approach towards increasing traffic through 5<sup>th</sup> freedom routes - intra-African air travel routes flown between two foreign countries but as part of a routing service to and from the airline's home country - aiming to reach 30% by the end of 2025. AFCAC's continued engagement with Member States is yielding positive results and has also led to increased air connectivity (108 new routes between September 2022 and April 2025), the completion of an aviation infrastructure gap analysis, and resolution of various air transport market access issues.<sup>23</sup>

**A review and update of the initiative . . . [and] a wider air transport network . . . will help grow air travel and accessibility and facilitate tourism [and] trade in goods and services. . .**

There is more to be done to iron out regulatory inconsistencies and restrictive bilateral air services arrangements. National carriers are often afforded protection from competition, while restrictive visa policies also contribute to limiting the initiative's full implementation. A review and update of the initiative would help ensure alignment with more recent developments in the sector, be it the growth of digital platforms, cybersecurity threats or e-commerce growth that is driving the demand for aviation services. A wider air transport network with new routes and enhanced airline competition would provide travellers with wider choices and may encourage lower fares, which in turn will help grow air travel and accessibility and facilitate tourism, trade in goods and services, related economic opportunity and investment.

# VISA OPENNESS IN AFRICA: Moving Forward



# Recommendations and suggestions for 2026 and beyond

**Freedom of movement is the human engine of Africa's integration.** It deepens social connections, strengthens resilience, and represents a critical component enabling the flow of goods and services across Africa's borders. It helps facilitate transfer of skills and knowledge, unlocks value chains, encourages cross-border investment, supports tourism, and reinforces the AfCFTA's objectives on industrialisation and job creation, thereby supporting sustainable economic development.

The evolution of countries' visa policies continues, and recognition of and support for visa openness remains steady. Changes in Africa's visa openness over the past year have been in both directions, and are generally nuanced and incremental rather than bold and progressive. However, 2025 sees a lower overall visa openness score. While several countries have opted for a more liberal visa policy regime with respect to citizens of specific countries, others have undertaken larger changes, either by introducing visa-on-arrival, or switching back to a visa required ahead of travel, sometimes in the context of a digitalisation process. The impact on travellers then depends on the substantive changes that result from such a switch; a well-functioning and cost-effective online process in such instances is still preferable to a traditional visa application.

Given the opportunities that can flow from digitalisation, and countries' concerns about retaining control and oversight over immigration and border processes, evolution in this respect will continue. It is important that in this process changes don't lead to unnecessary and costly barriers to the freedom of movement. And more so, that changes do not lead to regression to the cause of a visa-free Africa. Countries embarking on an ETA process, driven by security considerations in lieu of visa-free policies, should be mindful of striking the right balance between a reasonable basic vetting process on the one hand, and regressive systems that create significant new barriers to entry and that undermine the free movement of people in Africa on the other.

Streamlined requirements, transparent fees (ideally limited to direct cost recovery of the services rendered and not using visas as an income stream for national accounts), and interoperable digital systems will help translate any intent to facilitate movement into positive impact, making it easier, faster, and more affordable for Africans to move, do business, and participate in the continent's growing and integrated single market.

## Suggestions

- **Create a Visa-Free Africa campaign** to advocate for free movement.
- **Advocate for ratification of the PFMP:** Target advocacy of the PFMP through joint action with all key stakeholders to ensure a better understanding and build momentum towards broader ratification.
- **Invest in efficient border facilities:** Elevate facilities and upgrade skills training for frontline immigration officials to speed up border processes, consider automation via e-gates, make provision for vulnerable categories, and ensure high standards of customer service and anti-xenophobia awareness.
- **Replace visa-on-arrival with visa-free entry:** Countries that offer a visa-on-arrival should consider offering visa-free entry instead, since biometric information is captured by immigration authorities at entry.
- **Roll out e-Visas whenever a visa is still required ahead of travel:** Countries that still require a visa ahead of travel should set up functional, secure and user-friendly e-Visa portals to ease these processes.
- **Keep administrative and information overheads to a minimum in electronic processes:** Where e-Visas are in use, or an ETA is required or being considered, this should limit any administrative requirements to essential biometrics, and keep costs to a minimum (limited to basic system cost recovery and not used for income generation purposes) without imposing onerous additional requirements such as proof of available funds, return travel details, accommodation bookings or invitation letters from local operators.

- **Use social media:** Use official government social media channels to support and inform travellers, as well as to promote official and legal channels where a visa is still required.
- **Align policies with IATA information:** Ensure that visa policies are accurately conveyed to IATA and regularly verify accuracy and correct display of visa policy information on IATA portals given reliance by airlines and border management authorities on this information.
- **Offer electronic authorisation services through simplified processes:** Any ETAs being considered should prioritise simplicity and accessibility. Development of an app for the purpose of uploading biometrics and a photograph can simplify processes and should involve a largely automated process. Countries should consider making this process free of charge to prospective travellers.
- **Set multiple entry visas as a default:** Visas or ETAs should, where applicable, permit multiple entries as a default rather than be limited to single use, and their expiry date should be linked to the validity period of the travel document.
- **Allow the use of national identity documents among neighbours:** Countries with advanced and dependable population registry systems should consider allowing cross-border visa-free travel using national identity documents.
- **Use a central authoritative communication channel for each country for clear communications:** Government websites (including immigration and official tourism authorities, as well as any visa/ETA portals), should prioritise transparent, updated (and dated), easily accessible, and well-structured information relating to any visa-related policies with respect to all other countries. Several of the current e-Visa portals offer limited tangible information, for example often providing no transparent details about costs until the application process has already commenced.
- **Accelerate and recognise the impact of peoples' skills:** Support implementation of the AfCFTA in general and its Protocol on Trade in Services in particular through an AfCFTA pass offering fast track, digitised authorisation for those holding contracts in AfCFTA States. Visa portals should, as appropriate, accommodate these categories.
- **Create a means to recognise top performers,** and actively engage through the AUC and RECs to share experiences in managing visa free movement.
- **Focus on RECs:** Countries should re-evaluate and prioritise any outstanding signatures and adoption of regional free movement protocols.
- **Develop regional visas and collaborative approaches to movement and travel:** RECs should investigate the feasibility of a regional visa for citizens of non-Member States, which would offer broader access and a lower cost and administrative burden, while encouraging regional travel and trans-national tourism. In practice, a visa for one country in a REC would enable access to all its Member States.
- **Explore REC visa units:** RECs should consider regional visa units that evaluate regional visa policies, design and deliver training programmes for immigration and border officials on visa facilitation, customer service and risk profiling, and support development of secure and simple interoperable visa platforms in those situations where a visa is still required for intra-regional travel or visitors from outside the region.
- **Conduct REC visa advocacy:** RECs (visa units or other appropriate authority) should undertake targeted regional advocacy campaigns on the economic, social, and developmental gains of visa liberalisation, and advocate and provide technical assistance as needed for Member States to adopt and apply any outstanding commitments on regional protocols on free movement.
- **Prioritise reciprocity as a stepping stone:** Countries should identify which countries within the region and beyond offer their citizens visa-free entry, and consider reciprocating.
- **Accelerate regional free movement:** Members of RECs with high levels of cooperation should prioritise scrapping all forms of visas ahead of travel pertaining to casual, short-term visits.

## Annex 1. Limitations

The AVOI has applied an unchanged methodology to track visa openness ever since the original issue was published a decade ago. This involves a single source of information (IATA), and consistent scoring of countries' visa policies according to three categories: The requirement for a visa ahead of travel to the destination country, the availability of a visa on arrival at the destination country, and countries where visa-free entry is granted.

These policies are generally applied on a differentiated basis. For example, most countries apply different visa regimes to different nationalities. The AVOI measures visa policies that apply to the casual visitor and does not extend to categories that may extend the right of residence and occupation in another country. This is notwithstanding that higher levels of integration and broad freedom of movement have been attained within some regions, where citizens of certain countries may have additional rights beyond a casual, non-commercial visit. Activities that require a business visa are specifically not considered by the AVOI methodology, even if certain business activities (meetings, conferences, trade shows) might indeed be covered and permissible.

Assessing visa openness requires a consistent source of information. Since the report's inception in 2016, visa policy data has been drawn from IATA, the representative body of the international airline industry, because it maintains a global database of countries' passport, visa and health requirements pertaining to cross-border travel. It is thus of critical importance that countries cross-check the information that IATA shares with the industry, since it informs the advice given to travellers by their booking agents or is displayed on travel websites and helps determine any pre-boarding restrictions that airlines may apply to prospective travellers, given certain liabilities that they hold as the carrier.

At times, IATA information appears at odds with information shown on government websites or other resources. There are also times when information is not fully updated or appears not to have been communicated to IATA. At other times, new policies announced by relevant government agencies may not be in full force, or old policies may continue to appear on different official websites. To approach the data collection with consistency, this report uses the information as shown in relevant fields in the IATA database during the data collection period, with the exception of obvious errors. Deviating from this approach would risk introducing unverified or even anecdotal sources of data and other inconsistencies, even where at face value they may appear to be accurate.

The limited African experience with ETAs has shown that they are substantively comparable to, if not more onerous, than the requirements of a typical e-Visa application process. When noted in the IATA database as a compulsory requirement ahead of travel, they are classified by the AVOI in the same way as an e-Visa. To ensure consistency with the scoring methodology, and since an e-Visa is required ahead of travel, such scenarios are not awarded any points.

The real-world experience of travellers may not always correlate perfectly with countries' official visa policies, and most intra-African travel is through land borders rather than airports. Official processes may deviate from policies applied when embarking on air travel and arriving at a country's commercial airport. Sudden unilateral travel restrictions or border closures continue to form part of the experience of many prospective travellers, because of broader conflict, local cross-border disputes, or a myriad of other factors.

While a visa is a reliable overall proxy indicator of ease of travel, by definition, a visa authorises travel to a country but does not guarantee a right of entry. The final determination is the prerogative of immigration officials at the point of entry.

## Annex 2. Visa openness in Africa: 2025 country scores and rankings

Country	VISA OPENNESS INDICATORS (by number of other African countries)			Score	Rank
	No visa	Visa on arrival	Visa required*		
<b>The Gambia</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1.000</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Rwanda</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1.000</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Kenya</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0.962</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Benin</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0.906</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Ghana</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0.868</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Cabo Verde</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.864</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Mozambique</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0.842</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Mauritius</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0.826</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Burundi</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.823</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Sierra Leone</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0.811</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Eritrea</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.808</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Djibouti</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.800</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Comoros</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.800</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Senegal</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0.792</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Madagascar</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0.785</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Ethiopia</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0.732</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Tanzania</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>0.709</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Namibia</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>0.653</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Zambia</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>0.483</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Zimbabwe</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>0.472</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Malawi</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>0.472</b>	<b>20</b>
Côte d'Ivoire	22	0	31	0.415	22
Mali	21	1	31	0.411	23
Uganda	21	0	32	0.396	24
Tunisia	20	0	33	0.377	25
Guinea	20	0	33	0.377	25
South Africa	20	0	33	0.377	25
Burkina Faso	19	0	34	0.358	28
Angola	18	0	35	0.340	29
Niger	18	0	35	0.340	29
Botswana	18	0	35	0.340	29
Nigeria	17	0	36	0.321	32
Eswatini	17	0	36	0.321	32
Lesotho	16	0	37	0.302	34
Togo	15	0	38	0.283	35
Chad	15	0	38	0.283	35
Guinea-Bissau	14	0	39	0.264	37
Liberia	14	0	39	0.264	37
Central African Republic	13	0	40	0.245	39
Republic of the Congo	5	8	40	0.215	40
Somalia	1	11	41	0.185	41
Gabon	9	0	44	0.170	42
Mauritania	9	0	44	0.170	42
São Tomé and Príncipe	8	0	45	0.151	44
Morocco	8	0	45	0.151	44
Democratic Republic of Congo	5	3	45	0.140	46
Cameroon	6	0	47	0.113	47
Equatorial Guinea	6	0	47	0.113	47
Egypt	1	6	46	0.109	49
Algeria	5	0	48	0.094	50
South Sudan	3	2	48	0.087	51
Libya	2	0	51	0.038	52
Sudan	0	2	51	0.030	53
Seychelles	0	0	53	0.000	54
Western Sahara					

\* "Visa required" means a visa must be obtained before departure.  
Scores range from 0 to 1 (highest).

### Annex 3. Visa openness in Africa: Developments and initiatives, 2025

Country	Rank	Top-20 ranked	Offers e-Visa	Ratified AfCFTA <sup>24</sup>	Signed AfCFTA (not ratified) <sup>24</sup>	Signed PFMP <sup>25</sup>	Joined SAATM <sup>26</sup>
<b>The Gambia</b>	1	●		●		●	●
<b>Rwanda</b>	1	●	●	●		●	●
<b>Kenya</b>	3	●		●		●	●
<b>Benin</b>	4	●	●		●		●
<b>Ghana</b>	5	●		●		●	●
<b>Cabo Verde</b>	6	●		●			●
<b>Mozambique</b>	7	●	●	●		●	●
<b>Mauritius</b>	8	●		●			
<b>Burundi</b>	9	●		●			
<b>Sierra Leone</b>	10	●	●	●		●	●
<b>Eritrea</b>	11	●					
<b>Djibouti</b>	12	●	●	●		●	
<b>Comoros</b>	12	●		●		●	
<b>Senegal</b>	14	●		●		●	●
<b>Madagascar</b>	15	●	●	●			
<b>Ethiopia</b>	16	●	●	●			●
<b>Tanzania</b>	17	●	●	●		●	
<b>Namibia</b>	18	●	●	●			●
<b>Zambia</b>	19	●	●	●			●
<b>Zimbabwe</b>	20	●	●	●		●	●
<b>Malawi</b>	20	●	●	●		●	●
Côte d'Ivoire	22		●	●		●	●
Mali	23			●		●	●
Uganda	24		●	●		●	
Tunisia	25			●			
Guinea	25		●	●		●	●
South Africa	25		●	●			●
Burkina Faso	28		●	●		●	●
Angola	29		●	●		●	●
Niger	29			●		●	●
Botswana	29			●			●
Nigeria	32		●	●			●
Eswatini	32			●			●
Lesotho	34			●		●	●
Togo	35		●	●		●	●
Chad	35			●		●	●
Guinea-Bissau	37			●			●
Liberia	37		●	●		●	●
Central African Republic	39			●		●	●
Republic of the Congo	40			●		●	●
Somalia	41		●		●	●	
Gabon	42		●	●		●	●
Mauritania	42		●	●			
São Tomé and Príncipe	44		●	●		●	●
Morocco	44		●	●		●	●
Democratic Republic of Congo	45		●	●		●	●
Cameroon	46		●	●			●
Equatorial Guinea	46		●	●		●	●
Egypt	48		●	●			●
Algeria	49			●			
South Sudan	50		●		●	●	
Libya	51				●		
Sudan	52				●	●	
Seychelles	53			●			
Western Sahara				●			
<b>TOTAL</b>		21	31	49	5	32	38

AfCFTA=African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement; PFMP=Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons; SAATM=Single African Air Transport Market

## Endnotes

1. Swearing-in Speech of Dr. Sidi Ould Tah, 9<sup>th</sup> President of the African Development Bank Group.  
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2. <https://www.afdb.org/en/president-new-page/biography-new/presidents-vision>
3. Algeria, Gabon, Mauritius, Morocco, Namibia.
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<https://regional-integration-afdb.paperturn-view.com/?pid=ODg8882179&v=9.15>

### **Regional Integration Brief (RIB)**

AfDB Newsletter, Inaugural edition published in March 2025.

<https://regional-integration-afdb.paperturn-view.com/the-regional-integration-brief-by-afdb?pid=ODg8859752>

### **Africa Regional Integration Index (ARII)**

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<https://arii.uneca.org>

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[https://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/fullpublicationfiles/ARIA%20XI\\_Book\\_EN\\_12June\\_rev1.pdf](https://www.uneca.org/sites/default/files/fullpublicationfiles/ARIA%20XI_Book_EN_12June_rev1.pdf)

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