



Africa Visa Openness Report 2018



AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK GROUP

AFRICAN UNION



"Regional integration and trade based upon the free movement of persons, goods, services and capital is at the core of the business of the African Development Bank. . . we must accelerate investments in regional and national infrastructure, especially, to boost connectivity, reduce costs and raise competitiveness."

Akinwumi A. Adesina
President,
African Development Bank Group¹



What is happening on visas in Africa matters.

The backdrop is a historic one, with a growing number of African countries moving to **build ties through trade, open up the continent's skies** and **promote free movement of people**.

From being seen simply as a question of forms, fees and formalities, a country's decision to allow **visa-free** or **visa-on-arrival access** is making a steady buzz in policy circles and in the media. Frontrunners have been inspiring **more open border policies** across the continent.

As visa and travel document solutions catch on and **use of digital technology** streamlines the visa process, more African travellers can take up tourism, investment and business opportunities. As Africans start to enjoy **greater access** to a higher number of countries Africa-wide, the continent's **welcoming visa policy** is gearing up to attract global visitors.

The Africa Visa Openness Index



The Africa Visa Openness Index measures 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; whether they allow people to travel to their country without a visa, if travellers can get a visa on arrival in the country, or if visitors need to get a visa before travel.

Data on visa openness was collected in June and July 2018. The primary source of information was the International Air Transport Association (IATA).

The Africa Visa Openness Index is tracking changes in country scores over time to show which countries are making improvements that support freer movement of people across Africa.

In future editions, the Report will look at how countries are facilitating visa openness by cutting time, reducing costs, or simplifying the visa process as well as how far a visitor's experience on the ground matches up to the agreements or visa policies in place on paper.

Methodology

The higher a country's score in the Index, the more visa-open it is and the higher it ranks. Scores range from 0 – 1 (highest).

- Index categories:**
- Visa required
 - Visa on arrival
 - No visa

Each category is weighted based on its degree of openness. For example, a 'no visa' result is weighted by 1 (high openness), 'visa on arrival' is weighted by 0.8 and a 'visa required' by 0.

Index category indicators based on 54 African countries:^{*}

- Number of countries from whose citizens a visa is required as a % of total number of countries
- Number of countries whose citizens can get a visa on arrival as a % of total number of countries
- Number of countries from whose citizens no visa is required as a % of total number of countries

A country's score is calculated by adding the results from all three indicators:

$$[(\% \text{ of visa required} \times 0) + (\% \text{ of visa on arrival} \times 0.8) + (\% \text{ of no visa} \times 1)] / 100 = \text{country visa openness score.}$$

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^{*}All African Union member countries except Western Sahara, which was not ranked due to a lack of available information.

Acknowledgements

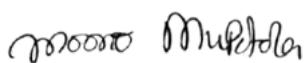
The 2018 Africa Visa Openness Index – now in its third edition – is the joint work of the African Development Bank (AfDB), the African Union Commission (AUC) and the World Economic Forum Global Agenda Council on Africa.

The first two editions in 2016 and 2017 energised the debate on free movement of people among African governments, businesses, investors and travellers. This latest report has drawn inspiration from the policy and media discussions on visa openness across Africa.

The AfDB and AUC senior management continue to be strong champions in driving visa openness in Africa and warm acknowledgement goes to their leadership on the Index.

The project was led by Jean-Guy Afrika, with valuable support from Oumar Sissoko in calculating the Index and Marie Anitha Jaotody. Warm acknowledgement also goes to the report's top contributors including Andoh Mensah and Gerald Ajumbo.

Special recognition goes to consultants for the AfDB: Elena Immambocus for writing the report; Peggy King Cointepas for the design and graphics; and José Carlos Alexandre for the images.



Moono Mupotola
Director,
Regional Development and Regional Integration

The High 5s for transforming Africa



The High 5s of the African Development Bank set out the path ahead for Africa's prosperity. By achieving the High 5s, Africa can meet around 90% of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063.²

"We will continue to invest in our High 5s to Light up and power Africa; Feed Africa; Integrate Africa; Industrialize Africa; and Improve the quality of life for the people of Africa.... Africa is open for business... We are now on a highway to boosting Africa's prosperity, through greater trade and investments 'without borders' among our nations."

Akinwumi A. Adesina
President,
African Development Bank Group³

The High 5s are closely connected and mutually reinforcing. Integrate Africa sets out specific goals on infrastructure, trade and investment, and the movement of people across the continent. Opening up visa regimes will help to capitalise on Africa's regional market, allowing African traders and investors' access to get involved in Africa-wide transactions.



To further drive Africa's economic and social development, the first Africa Investment Forum,⁴ championed by the African Development Bank, will be held in November 2018. The Forum will be a unique marketplace for getting Africa's investment projects off the ground. In this context, free movement of people promotes regional integration and makes even better business sense. As infrastructure expands across Africa, and tangible trade and investment opportunities are put on the table, Africans need to travel with greater ease.

Integrate Africa⁵

Goal to 2025 - Regional market

- Building regional infrastructure
- Boosting intra-African trade & investment
- Facilitating movement of people across borders



Foreword, African Development Bank

Travel is something that unites us all. But it should be open to all Africans. It cannot remain a privilege for a few, a lottery dependent on your passport and chosen destination.

When we board a plane, catch a bus, step on a train, get in a car, or move on foot we are simply travellers. At borders and crossings, you see African men, women, young people, sole travellers and families either coming, going or in transit. The travel experience is African integration in action. Tourists, investors, business people and students all positively impact a country's economy when they move more freely. As well as driving growth and investment, travel connects cultures and transfers ideas, and this soft impact brings African unity to life.

The African Development Bank is proud to see how the Africa Visa Openness Index – now in its third edition – is championing easier travel for Africans. With a simple policy shift to liberalise visa regimes, countries can tap into the economic benefits of opening up borders and join the upward trend on integration. It's heartening to see the progress since 2016, with a quarter of all countries now allowing African citizens to visit without need for a visa. Average scores of the top 10 and 20 countries in the Index rose, 15 countries moved up in rank, and a new country, Benin, joined Seychelles in offering visa-free access for all Africans.

Yet the question remains: does this go far enough and what opportunities are being missed when day in, day out, Africans still need visas to travel to just over half of the continent? More countries and regional blocs announced plans to open borders in 2017 and 2018, and this is welcome. Still, more can be done by governments and policymakers to drive visa openness solutions. From offering visas-on-arrival to visa-free regional blocs, there is a wide menu of choices available. The top performers on the Index have already reaped the benefits of liberal visa policies, efficient digital systems and travel document solutions.

The African travel experience is in our collective hands. Let's take action to keep Africa moving.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Khaled F. Sherif".

Dr. Khaled F. Sherif
Vice-President,
Regional Development, Integration and Business Delivery

African Union's Agenda 2063⁶

ASPIRATION 2.

An integrated continent, politically united based on the ideals of Pan Africanism and the vision of Africa's Renaissance.

20. We aspire that by 2063, Africa shall:

Be a United Africa;

Have world class, integrative infrastructure that criss-crosses the continent;

Have dynamic and mutually beneficial links with her Diaspora; and

Be a continent with seamless borders, and management of cross border resources through dialogue.

24. Africa shall be a continent where the free movement of people, capital, goods and services will result in significant increases in trade and investments amongst African countries rising to unprecedented levels, and strengthen Africa's place in global trade.

A CALL TO ACTION

72. We hereby adopt Agenda 2063, as a collective vision and roadmap for the next fifty years and therefore commit to speed-up actions to:

I. Introduce an African Passport, issued by Member states, capitalising on the global migration towards e-passports, and with the abolishment of visa requirements for all African citizens in all African countries by 2018.



AFRICAN UNION

"There is tremendous value in the African Union's flagship initiatives, such as Agenda 2063... the Single African Air Transport Market... is a major step forward for transportation. We are nearly ready to adopt the Continental Free Trade Area... Freedom of movement for people in Africa is equally important, and it is achievable in 2018. By committing to break down these barriers, we will send a tremendous signal in Africa and beyond, that it is no longer business as usual."

Paul Kagame
President of Rwanda,
African Union Chairperson 2018⁷

Single African Air Transport Market

A number of flagship projects of Agenda 2063 moved further ahead in 2018, linked to making it easier for Africans to travel across the continent. At the African Union Summit in January, the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM) was launched, signed by 23 countries.⁸ The SAATM aims to promote trade, investment and tourism, creating more jobs and growth.

African Continental Free Trade Area

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) was officially established in March 2018 and adopted by close to 50 countries. The AfCFTA adds renewed impetus to removing obstacles to travel, trade and invest in Africa.⁹ Visa openness policies break down borders and can help to capitalise on these milestones, driving Africa's growth and development.

Free Movement Protocol

With the Free Movement Protocol adopted by 30 countries at the launch of the AfCFTA,¹⁰ easing travel restrictions for African citizens took another important step forward. This follows the 2016 launch of the African Union passport for African heads of state and high-level representatives. The next phase of the passport will be rolled out for African citizens.



Foreword, African Union Commission

A burst of energy accompanied developments towards a more integrated Africa in 2018. The establishment of a free trade area and single sky across Africa heralds a vibrant new era.

Across flagship programmes of the African Union's Agenda 2063, there are signs of progress. From the infrastructure connecting cities, to agricultural transformation in value chains, alongside acceleration of skills development and internet access, to financial integration. Breaking down barriers for Africans to move with greater ease is linked to all these goals.

At the foundation of Africa's collective vision is the need for Africans to have right of entry across Africa, in terms of visa-free access to other countries, and an African passport for all. The signing of the Free Movement Protocol is a strong indication that this is within reach.

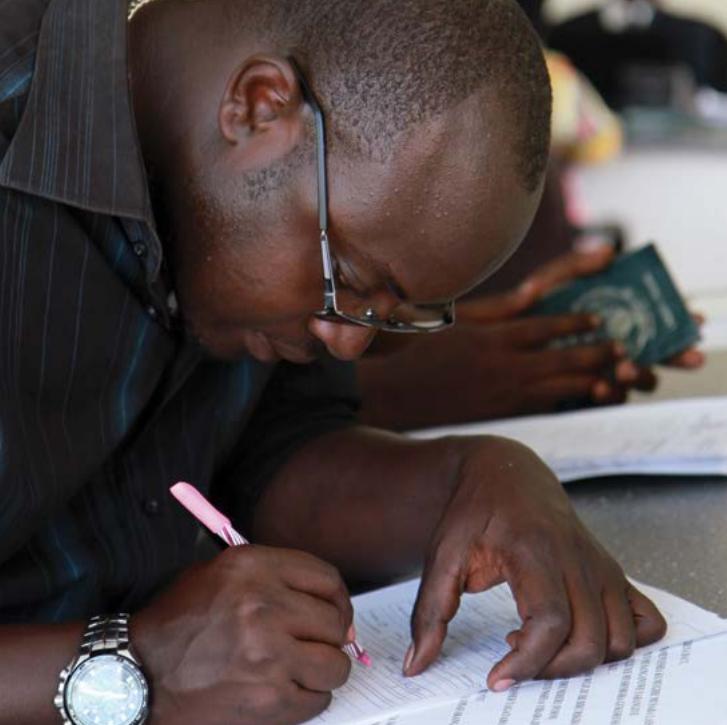
The latest edition of the Africa Visa Openness Index shows that progress has been steadfast. In 2018, 43 countries improved or maintained their visa openness score, with a rise in the average score between 2016-2018. Yet, ease of access varies region by region, and the top 10 performers are far ahead, with an average score of nearly double the overall average.

Africa's development dynamics remain positive, but there are inequalities and vulnerabilities to be addressed in all regions on the continent. In particular, small and medium-sized enterprises, youth, and women need more channels to actively participate in economic life. Tourism is one sector, which offers this promise and is already on a strong growth trajectory.

Against this backdrop, the Index will continue to be an increasingly important policy tool for review and reflection, and help to reinforce the free movement of people across Africa. The top performing countries on the Index have accrued big benefits in the tourism industry, and the impact is reaching further still. Accompanied by business reforms and infrastructure investments, openness on visas is being used as part of a virtuous circle to drive growth.

What remains is to capitalise on the political will driving Africa's integration in 2018, and to translate this into tangible benefits for all. A visa-free Africa is not only possible, but vital.

H.E Kwesi Quartey
Deputy Chairperson
African Union Commission



Glossary

AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AfDB	African Development Bank Group
AUC	African Union Commission
AU	African Union
CEMAC	Central African Economic and Monetary Union
CEN-SAD	Community of Sahel-Saharan States
EAC	East African Community
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
eVisa	Electronic visa
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HIC	High income country
IATA	International Air Transport Association
IOM	International Organization for Migration
LIC	Low income country
LMIC	Lower middle income country
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
REC	Regional Economic Community
SAATM	Single African Air Transport Market
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise
UMA	Arab Maghreb Union
UMIC	Upper middle income country
USD	United States dollar
WEF	World Economic Forum
WTTC	World Travel & Tourism Council

Definitions

A **VISA** is an endorsement (through a certificate or stamp in a travel document) showing a visitor is allowed to enter the country for a specific length of time and for specific activities.

VISA REQUIRED means a visa has to be obtained before departure from an embassy, an honorary consulate or another official representative.

VISA ON ARRIVAL means a visa has to be obtained on arrival in the country. This includes filling out any visa forms, paying the visa fee if applicable and receiving a visa in a travel document.

NO VISA means that there is no visa needed either before departure or on arrival, with no entry authorisation required to enter freely into the country. Entry procedures still need to be complied with – these can include filling out entry forms and receiving an entry stamp.

eVISA means an electronic visa that can be obtained before departure from an official online platform.



Visa overview

VISA OPENNESS means how easy it is for visitors to travel to a country when it comes to visas.

A **MORE VISA-OPEN COUNTRY** has a liberal or relaxed visa policy for travellers, so that visitors either do not need a visa when they enter or can get a visa on arrival. A more visa-restrictive country requires visitors to get a visa before they travel, for example, from an Embassy.

VISAS ARE USED FOR DIFFERENT REASONS, as a security measure to control the entry and duration of the stay of people coming into a country, to limit a visitor's activities, to generate revenue or to show reciprocity to match the treatment other countries give to one's citizens.

Visa openness in Africa

In 2018, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and Single African Air Transport Market were launched, and progress was made on the Free Movement of Persons Protocol.

The AfCFTA was signed by close to 50 countries at the AU Summit in March 2018, alongside the Kigali Declaration and the Free Movement Protocol.¹¹ 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 2020,¹² benefitting African producers, consumers and traders.

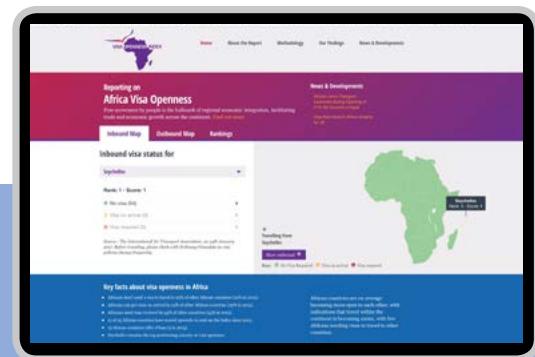
The developments on Free Movement of Persons pave the way for countries to take steps towards allowing African citizens rights of residence and establishment Africa-wide. The Single African Air Transport Market – launched in January 2018 – marks another milestone to improve air connectivity that means faster, cheaper and accessible travel across Africa.¹³

An Africa with open borders and open skies is open for business. And, the upcoming Africa Investment Forum aims to connect the continent's investors and fast-track investments.¹⁴

Removing obstacles for Africans to visit, explore, and invest in the continent fits into this context. More countries are putting in place visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to catalyse tourism and attract investment, alongside measures to improve their business environment.

Digital technology is expanding Africa-wide, as government systems are streamlined and more countries offer eVisas, promoting efficiency and increasing access to information.

The priorities on how to forge closer connections across countries in Africa have been set. What happens next, as countries follow the trend towards visa openness, is worth watching.



Visa openness online platform

A visa openness online platform is available at www.visaopenness.org

The platform showcases how African countries are performing on visa openness overall and the progress being made on scores and rankings on a yearly basis. To promote greater transparency, the platform highlights the visa policy of each country from a centralised hub.

Visa openness findings, 2018

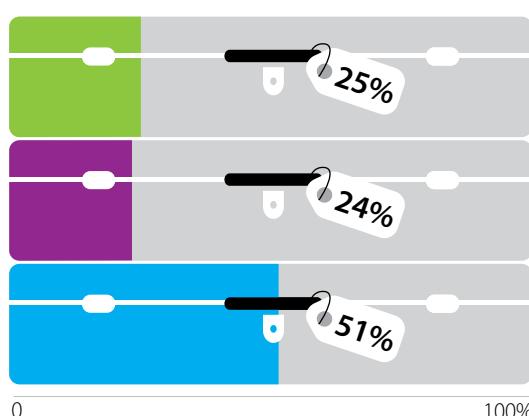
African countries on average are becoming more open to each other, with indications that travel within the continent is getting easier. Compared to 2017 and 2016, progress has been made in 2018 against visa openness indicators. Africans currently do not need a visa to travel to more countries than in previous years, and they need visas to travel to fewer countries.

However, the fact that Africans still require visas to travel to just over half of other African countries shows more progress is needed to realise free movement of people continent-wide.

Average visa openness

- **Africans do not need a visa to travel to 25% of other African countries** (up from 22% in 2017, and 20% in 2016).
- **Africans can get visas on arrival in 24% of other African countries** (also 24% in 2017, and 25% in 2016).
- **Africans need visas to travel to 51% of other African countries** (down from 54% in 2017, and 55% in 2016).

Average visa openness, 2018

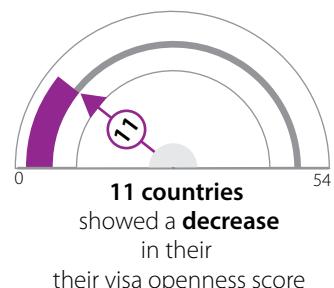


Africans do not need a visa to travel to 25% of other African countries

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Africans need visas to travel to 51% of other African countries

Change in visa openness scores, 2017-2018



Change in visa openness scores, 2016-2018 (%)

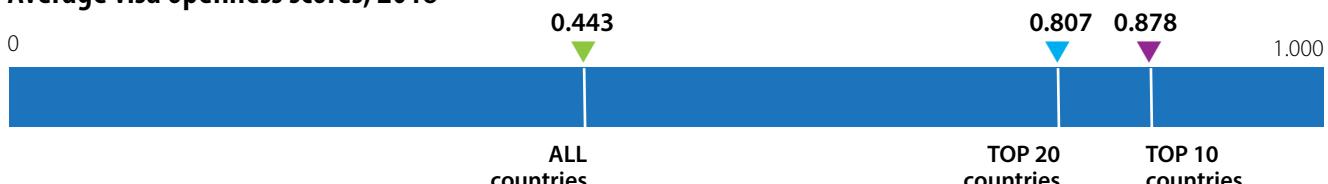


Africans do not need a visa to travel to other African countries

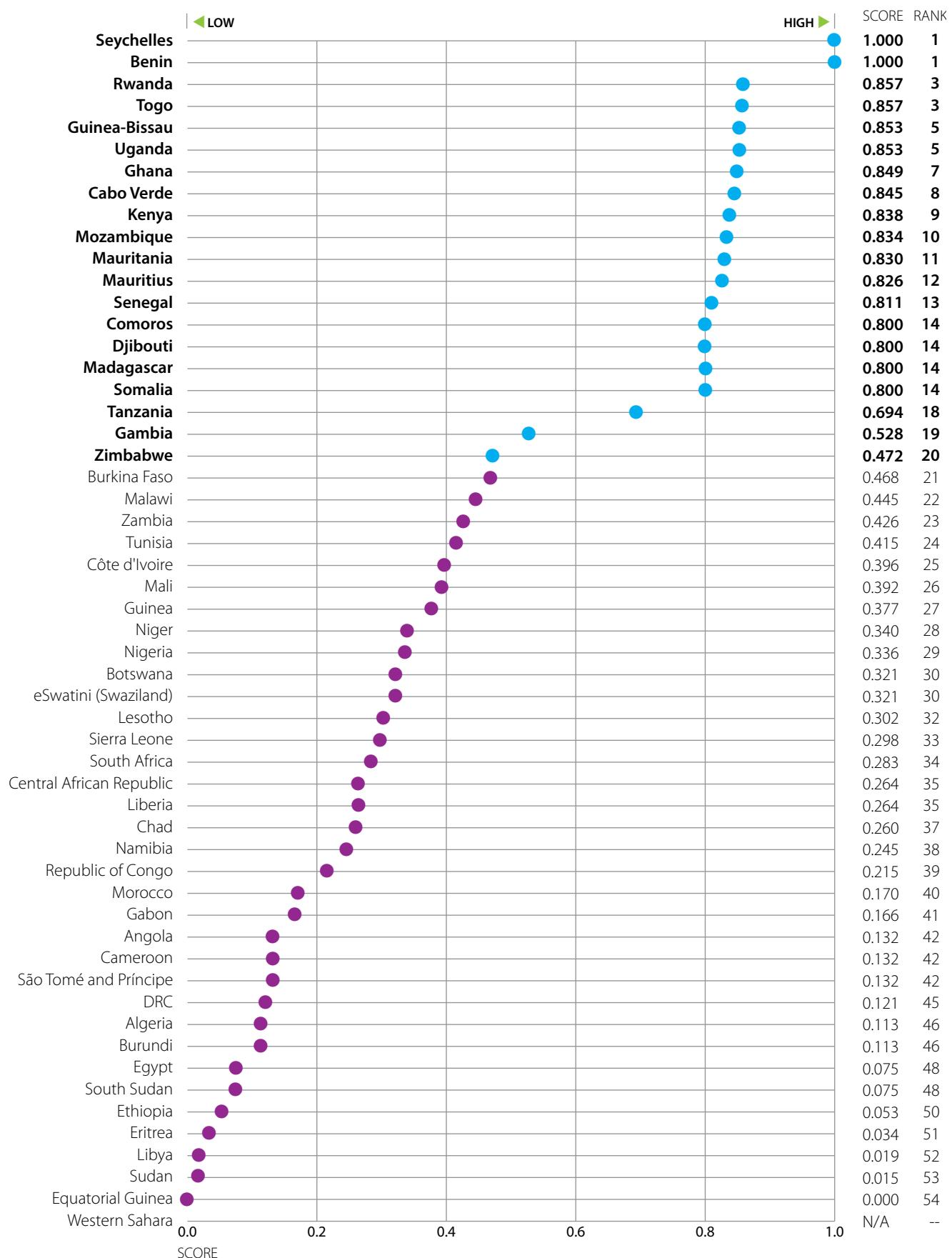
Africans can get visas on arrival in other African countries

Africans need visas to travel to other African countries

Average visa openness scores, 2018



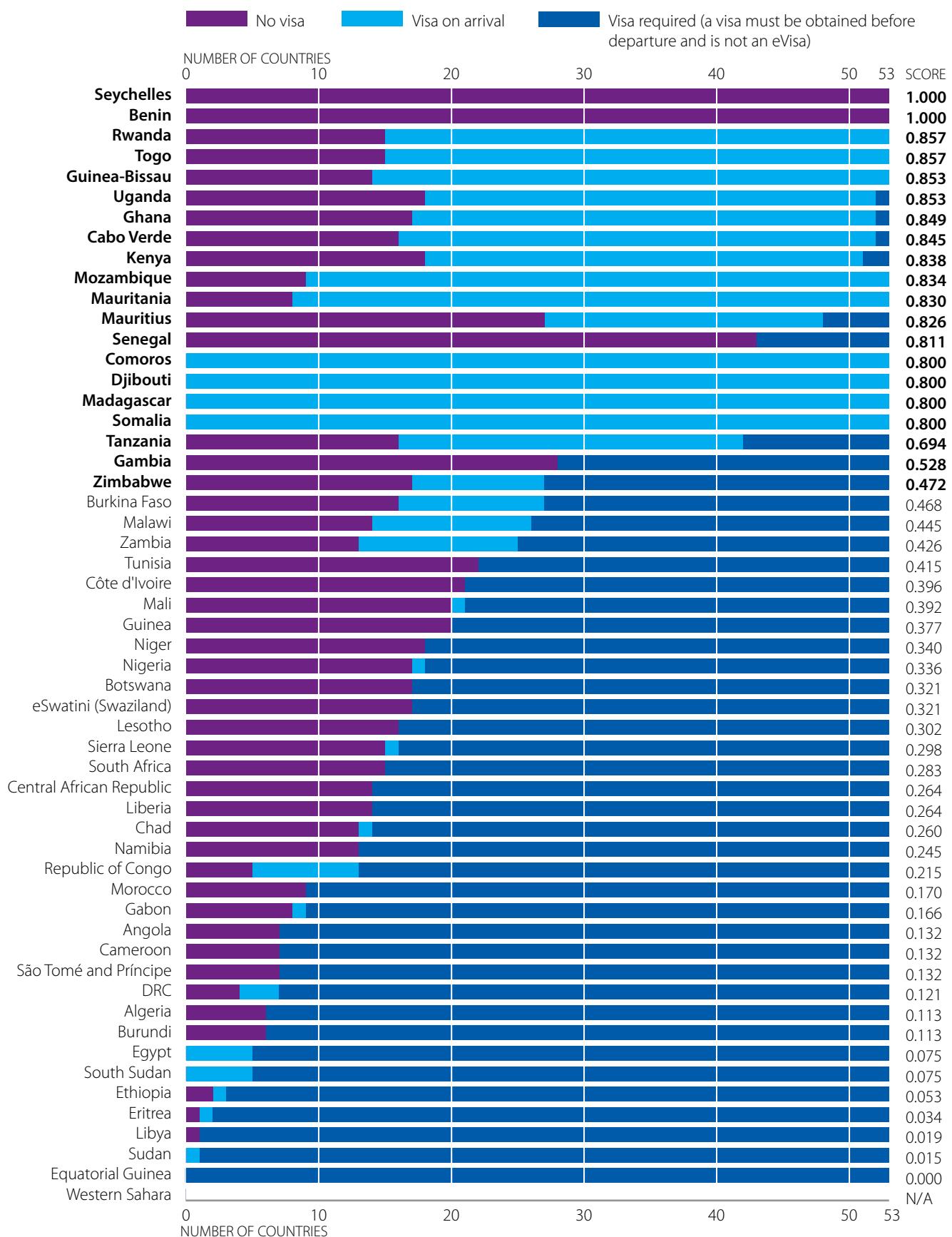
Visa openness in Africa 2018: country scores and ranking



Scores range from 0-1 (highest possible)

Source : AfDB calculation based on data obtained from IATA – June-July, 2018.

Visa openness in Africa by category: no visa, visa on arrival, visa required

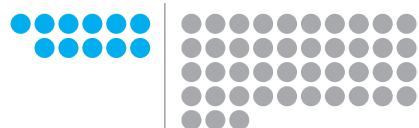


*Scores range from 0 to 1 (highest)

Source : AfDB calculation based on data obtained from IATA – June-July, 2018.

Access overview

Facilitating visa access improved in 2018, with slightly more countries offering liberal access to all Africans, while the number of countries offering visas on arrival to all Africans stayed the same. More countries offered eVisas in 2018, an increase of seven countries from 2016.



11 African countries (●) offer liberal access (visa-free or visa on arrival) to all Africans (up from 10 in 2017, and 13 in 2016).



4 African countries (●) offer visa on arrival to all Africans (also 4 in 2017, and 3 in 2016).



16 African countries (●) offer eVisas (up from 13 in 2017, and 9 in 2016)

Regional overview

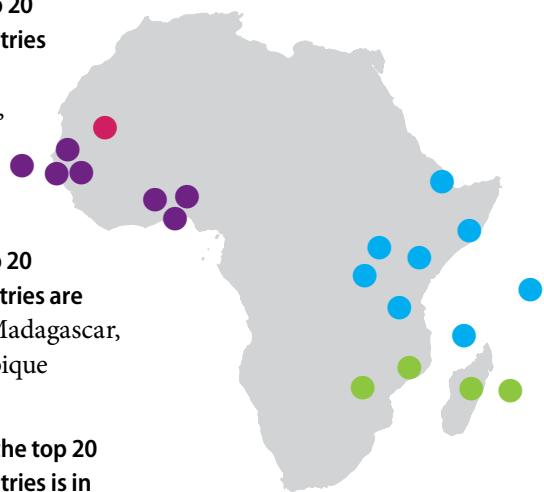
Free movement of people continues to vary region by region, in part reflecting regional policies. In 2018, the top 20 countries include the same number of countries in East Africa, West Africa, Southern Africa and North Africa as in 2017, and no countries in Central Africa.

- **8 countries in the top 20 most visa-open countries are in East Africa** (Comoros, Djibouti, Kenya, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, Uganda and Tanzania).

- **7 countries in the top 20 most visa-open countries are in West Africa** (Benin, Cabo Verde, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Senegal and Togo).

- **4 countries in the top 20 most visa-open countries are in Southern Africa** (Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique and Zimbabwe).

- **Only one country in the top 20 most visa-open countries is in North Africa** (Mauritania).

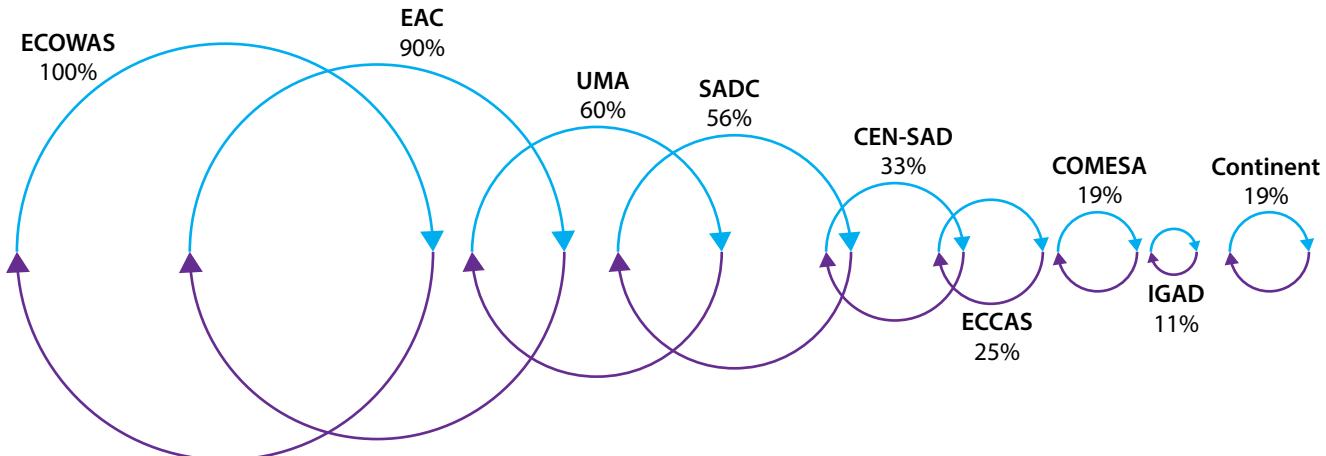


Of the top 20 most visa-open countries, none are in **Central Africa**.

Open reciprocity (measuring ‘no visa’ policies) Africa-wide was 19% (up from 17% in 2017). Closed reciprocity Africa-wide was 33% (down from 36% in 2017).

Top performing RECs on open reciprocity include: ECOWAS (100%), EAC (90%), UMA (60%) and SADC (56%).

Reciprocity of visa policies by RECs, 2018 (%)



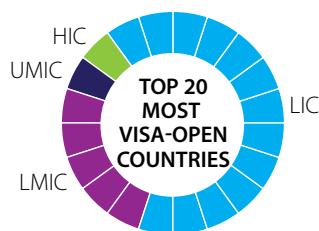
Top 10/20 countries

The top 10 and the top 20 most visa-open countries continued to improve their average score in 2018, reflecting a number of countries' more liberal visa policies.

The average score for all African countries is just over half of the average score of the top 10 most visa-open countries, showing that the top performers remain significantly ahead.

Africa's upper-middle economies as a group have low visa openness scores, while most of the top 20 countries in the Index are low-income or lower-middle income economies.

- **Seychelles** and **Benin** are the top performing countries, offering visa-free access to all Africans.
- **Two new countries** from West Africa (Benin) and Southern Africa (Zimbabwe) entered the top 20 most visa-open countries.
- **Average score for the top 10 countries** is 0.878 (up from 0.853 in 2017, and 0.861 in 2016).
- **Average score for the top 20 countries** is 0.807 (up from 0.768 in 2017, and 0.734 in 2016).
- **Average score for all countries** is 0.443 (up from 0.420 in 2017, and 0.425 in 2016).



- **18 of the top 20 countries** are low-income or lower-middle income economies. 7 out of 8 of Africa's upper-middle income economies have low visa openness scores.



- All the top 20 most visa-open countries (where data is available) have an upward trajectory on travel and tourism figures on GDP, visitor exports and investments.¹⁵

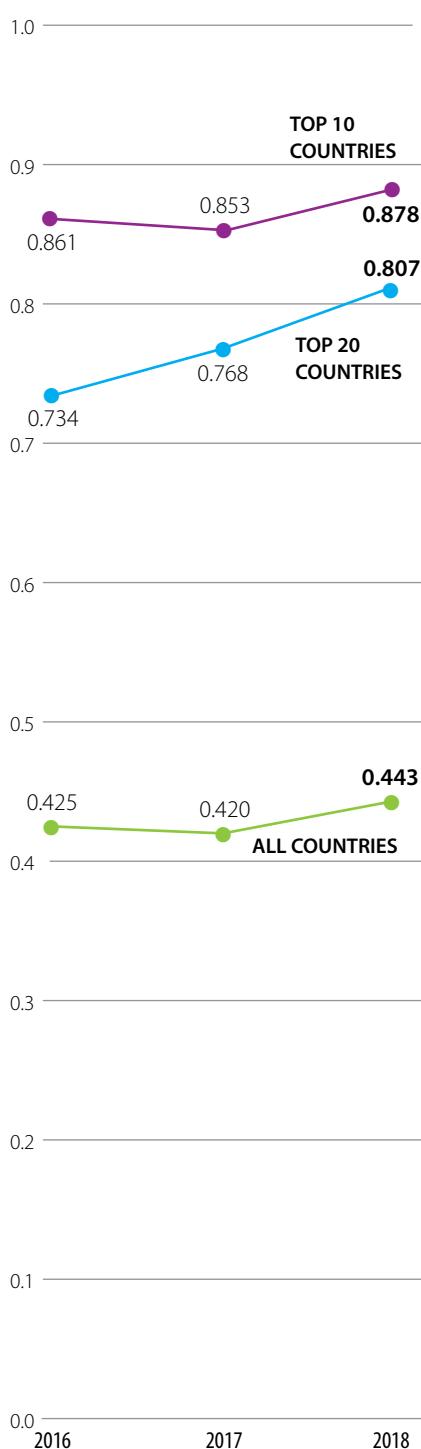


- **18 of the top 20 most visa-open countries** improved their overall performance in the World Bank Group's *Doing Business 2018* 'distance to frontier' measure, showing how economies are becoming more open.¹⁶



- Half of the top 20 most visa-open countries have an upward trend of real GDP growth.¹⁷

Average visa openness scores, 2016-2018



Visa openness progress, 2016-2018

There is an upward trend for African countries to be more open to each other when it comes to their visa policies.

Over three-quarters of countries Africa-wide scored the same or higher than before on the Index in 2018. And a quarter of countries moved up in rank from 2017.

■ **43 countries improved or maintained their score** (47 countries in 2017).

■ **15 countries moved upwards in rank** on the Index (12 in 2017).

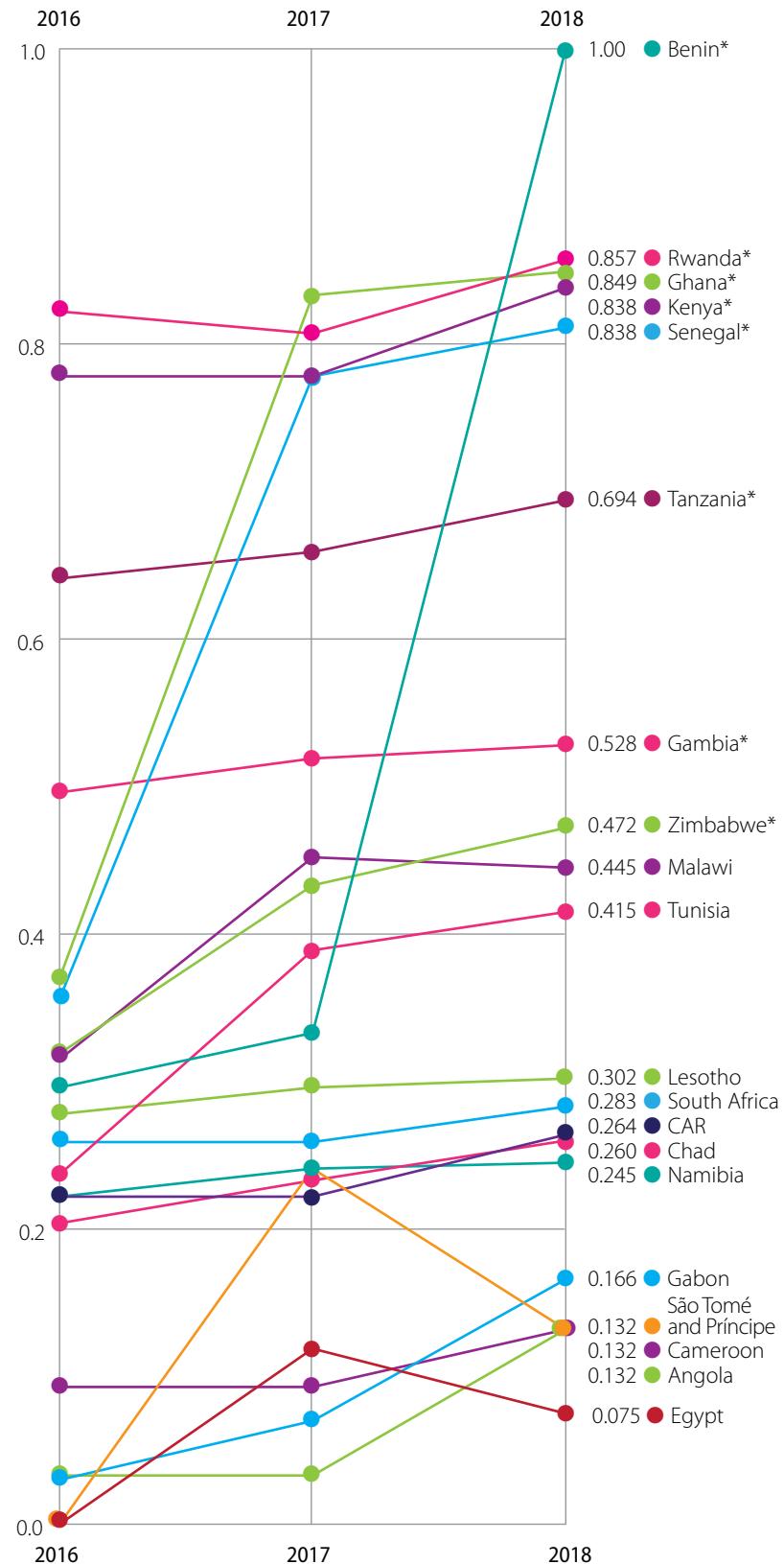
Progress on visa openness between 2016-2018 was made across each region. The gap in the average scores of the top 10 and top 20 countries also narrowed between 2016 and 2018.

The top 20 improvers, based on progress made on visa openness scores between 2016-2018, cover Southern Africa, West Africa, Central Africa, East Africa and North Africa. The top improvers all have policies allowing Africans greater visa-free or visa-on-arrival access.

Eight of the top 20 improvers feature in the top 20 countries in the Index in 2018. Four of the top 20 improvers moved into the top 20 countries between 2016-2018, showing how a decision to liberalise visa policies has had an immediate effect on scores and rank.

Top 20 countries with improved visa openness scores, 2016-2018

* Included in the Top 20 Visa Openness countries, 2018





Case studies: countries moving up in 2018



Benin

- Benin joins Seychelles at the top of the Index, offering **visa-free access to all Africans**.
- **2018 Index ranking: no.1** (up from no.27 in 2017, and no.31 in 2016).
- **2018 Liberal access (visa-free or visa on arrival to Africans): 100%** (up from 33% in 2017, and 30% in 2016).

Benin was the highest performing country since the last edition of the Africa Visa Openness Index. The country increased its score by 200%, moving from 27th place in 2017 to join Seychelles at the top in 2018. Benin is only the second country on the continent to offer visa-free access to all African countries and the first Francophone country to do so.

"Inspired by Rwanda's experience, I have come to the decision that Benin will no longer demand visas for Africans. This South-South cooperation can become a reality."

Patrice Talon
President of Benin¹⁸

President Talon's landmark decision to open Benin's borders for African visitors from January 2017 has been heralded by ECOWAS as promoting a people-centred approach to integration in the region. Benin's open visa policy made headlines in African and global news.

"It's a decision that gives weight to the objective of going from an ECOWAS of States to an ECOWAS of the people by 2020."

Moustapha Cisse Lo
ECOWAS Parliament President¹⁹

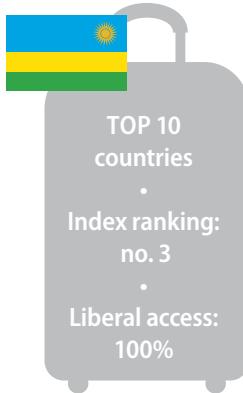
The move ties into the government's tourism action programme launched in December 2016, which includes a priority development of seven tourism sites across the country. Total travel and tourism contributed 5.7% to Benin's GDP in 2017 and is forecast to rise by 3.8% in 2018, according to the World Travel & Tourism Council Economic Impact 2018 report.²⁰

"Removal of visa for all Africans entering Benin for less than 90 days. The Consulate General reminds all African nationals that they are exempt from a visa to enter Benin, for visits not exceeding 90 days."

Consulate General of Benin²¹

In 2018, Benin put in place new measures to improve overall entry access to the country. From March, non-Africans wishing to visit for less than a week, with a valid passport and yellow fever certificate, can apply for a special tourist visa on arrival for a set fee. From April, global visitors can obtain an eVisa for Benin from <https://evisa.gouv.bj>, as part of the country's Smart Gouv programme to simplify entry and short stay visa processes.

Thanks to its decision to open up the country for African as well as global visitors, Benin scores highly in the global Welcoming Countries Rank 2018 of the Passport Index.²² In 2018, Benin ranked at number six, with a welcoming score of 191, up from 54 in 2017 – linked to the number of countries whose citizens can access Benin visa-free or with visa on arrival. Across Africa, Benin nationals can travel to 20 countries visa-free and to 12 countries with a visa on arrival, representing 60% liberal access on the continent.



Rwanda

- **Rwanda moved up in the top 10 countries** in the Index.
- **2018 Index ranking: no.3** (up from no.9 in 2017, and no.9 in 2016).
- **2018 Liberal access (visa-free or visa on arrival to Africans): 100%** (up from 98% in 2017, and 100% in 2016).

Rwanda continues to move up the Africa Visa Openness Index and ranks in third position in 2018, having improved access for nine countries on the continent. Africans enjoy liberal access to Rwanda, with no visa required for 15 countries and visa on arrival for 38 countries.

A top 10 performer on the Index since 2016, the country's open visa policy has inspired countries Africa-wide, including Benin, and soon Ethiopia, to liberalise their visa regimes.

"Citizens of all countries will get a visa upon arrival without prior application, starting January 1, 2018."

Yves Butera
Spokesperson, Directorate-General
of Immigration and Emigration, Rwanda²³

Against this backdrop, between 2013-2016, the number of Africans receiving visas on arrival in Rwanda increased by more than 100%.²⁴ The country attracted higher numbers of visitors, greater investment, and hosted more conferences due to the removal of travel restrictions. Total travel and tourism contributed 12.7% to Rwanda's GDP in 2017 and is forecast to rise by 6.8% in 2018, according to the World Travel & Tourism Council Economic Impact 2018 report.²⁵

Rwanda has also simplified travel document solutions by promoting passport-free travel with its neighbours. A unified national identity card and border pass is in place for citizens of Rwanda, Kenya and Uganda, whilst a single tourist visa for the three countries is available.

"The new visa regime opens Rwanda to the world and is good for business. Rwanda believes that the free movement of people fosters trade and tourism and is good for the continent's integration policy. We are aware of the challenges of open borders, but as a country, we also believe that the benefits of our policy outweigh the potential setbacks."

Louise Mushikiwabo
Foreign Minister, Rwanda²⁶

As of January 2018, Rwanda put in place a landmark new visa regime that allows all travellers worldwide to visit the country and obtain a 30-day visa on arrival. The policy marks an important step in terms of Rwanda opening up to other Africans as well as to all global visitors. Rwanda ranks at number one in the global Welcoming Countries Rank 2018 of the Passport Index,²⁷ with a score of 198 – linked to the number of countries whose citizens can easily visit Rwanda.



Kenya

- **Kenya moved into the top 10 countries** in the Index.
- **2018 Index ranking: no.9** (up from no.15 in 2017, and no.16 in 2016).
- **2018 Liberal access (visa-free or visa on arrival to Africans): 96%** (up from 89% in 2017, and 89% in 2016).

Kenya moved up six places into the top 10 countries in the Africa Visa Openness Index in 2018. The country's improved score follows its new visa-on-arrival policy for all Africans, which was highlighted in President Kenyatta's inauguration speech in November 2017.

"For my fellow Africans, the free movement of people on our continent has always been a cornerstone of Pan-African brotherhood and fraternity. Today, I am directing that any African wishing to visit Kenya will be eligible to receive a visa at the port of entry. To underscore Kenya's commitment, this shall not be done on the basis of reciprocity. The freer we are to travel and live with one another, the more integrated and appreciative of our diversity, we will become."

Uhuru Kenyatta
President of Kenya²⁸

The liberalised visa regime was set up to promote more open borders across the continent and to boost trade, security and Africa-wide integration. It has been widely publicised, with the African Union Commission voicing the need for countries to follow Kenya's example.

"Delighted by Pres @UKenyatta's announcement to issue visas at arrival for all Africans visiting Kenya. Congratulations on this historic decision! I urge all African states that have not yet done so, to take similar measures towards free movement for all Africans across Africa."

Moussa Faki Mahamat
African Union Commission Chairperson²⁹

The move supports Kenya's efforts to drive growth in travel by providing a straightforward process for short-term visas, offering eVisas for travellers at <http://evisa.go.ke/evisa.html>. Total travel and tourism contributed 9.7% to Kenya's GDP in 2017 and is forecast to rise by 5.5% in 2018, according to the World Travel & Tourism Council Economic Impact 2018 report.³⁰

Kenya's open visa policy will, in turn, support Kenya's strong air transport sector. The sector facilitates over USD 10 billion in exports, around USD 4.4 billion in foreign direct investment, and around USD 800,000 in inbound leisure and business tourism for Kenya.³¹

At the same time, Kenya is driving integration within the East African Community, with the announcement that citizens from Burundi, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda can move freely with their identity cards, work, do business and own property on an equal basis.

Kenyan nationals can travel to 18 African countries visa-free and to 15 African countries with a visa on arrival, which represents one of the highest mobility rates on the continent.



Senegal

- **Senegal moved up the top 20 countries** in the Index.
- **2018 Index ranking: no.13**
(up from no.15 in 2017, and no.24 in 2016).
- **2018 Liberal access (visa-free or visa on arrival to Africans):**
81% (up from 78% in 2017, and 37% in 2016).

Senegal rose steadily upwards in the top 20 countries in the Africa Visa Openness Index in 2018. The country built on progress made since 2016, with improved visa-free access for more countries. It is one of few countries in the top 20 that does not offer visas on arrival.

In a bid to boost the tourism sector and attract more visitors, Senegal decided to end paid visas from May 2015 for a number of nationalities, including those from ECOWAS member states. Total travel and tourism contributed 10.4% to Senegal's GDP in 2017 and is forecast to rise by 4.0% in 2018, according to the World Travel & Tourism Council Economic Impact 2018 report.³²



Zimbabwe

- **Zimbabwe moved into the top 20 countries** in the Index.
- **2018 Index ranking: no.20**
(up from no.21 in 2017, and no.27 in 2016).
- **2018 Liberal access (visa-free or visa on arrival to Africans): 51%**
(up from 46% in 2017, and 33% in 2016).

Zimbabwe continued to move up the Africa Visa Openness Index and entered the top 20 countries in 2018. The country has made steady progress since 2016, improving its liberal access.

The government is introducing a visa-on-arrival policy for 28 countries worldwide, as well as for SADC members, to build the tourism sector and promote greater investment. Total travel and tourism contributed 7.1% to Zimbabwe's GDP in 2017 and is forecast to rise by 2.1% in 2018, according to the World Travel & Tourism Council Economic Impact 2018 report.³³

The plans are being matched by an e-government programme to improve the visa process, with eVisas issued at <https://www.evisa.gov.zw>, alongside increased promotion of the national airline.



Regional mobility across Africa

Africa is the world's second fastest growing region.³⁴ Yet, across regional blocs there are big challenges in driving sustainable growth, boosting employment and tackling inequalities.

Deepening regional integration to include free movement of people, capital and services is a priority to help meet Agenda 2063 and reach the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. Visa-free regional blocs underpin regional integration. At the same time, greater regional mobility opens up opportunities for SMEs and young people by expanding their horizons Africa-wide.

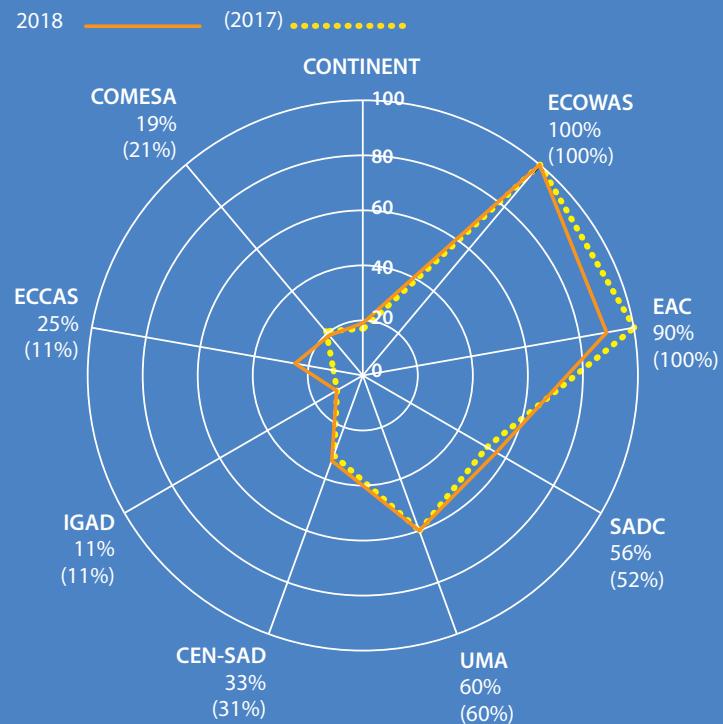
In 2018, the continent's open reciprocity (measuring 'no visa' policies) stood at 19% (up from 17% in 2017), and closed reciprocity at 33% (down from 36% in 2017). Progress is being made at regional level to allow free movement of people, but there is still a way to travel.

Visa-free access for other member states continues to vary across Africa's Regional Economic Communities (RECs). As was the case in 2017, the top performing RECs on reciprocal open visa policies are ECOWAS (100%), EAC (90%), UMA (60%) and SADC (56%).

Three RECs improved their open reciprocity scores in 2018, including SADC, CEN-SAD and ECCAS. In the case of ECCAS, the score more than doubled, with 25% open reciprocity across the region.

This ties into the decision of CEMAC (which includes six of the eleven ECCAS member states) to ratify free movement of people and visa-free travel as of October 2017.³⁵ COMESA welcomed Tunisia and Somalia as new members in July 2018,³⁶ paving the way for greater visa openness across the regional bloc, which currently has 19% open reciprocity.

Reciprocity of visa policies, % by RECs, 2017-2018





Media headlines on visa openness

When it comes to promoting freedom of movement across Africa in line with Agenda 2063, raising awareness of how visa openness has an impact at country and continent-level is vital.

Media houses across the continent picked up the findings of the 2017 Africa Visa Openness Index, generating a broader conversation on Africa-wide progress. This highlighted the top performers, and pointed to the barriers that prevent a truly open Africa for all Africans.

Following the launch of the Index report in May 2017, over 120 articles referencing the Index appeared in African press from 21 countries across all regions. Africa-wide and international media covered the Index with headlines ranging from "How open is Africa for African travellers?"³⁷ to "The practical guide to travelling around Africa if you are African."³⁸ The Index also featured in radio and television shows in Africa and worldwide.

The discussion continued apace in social media circles, with comments on Twitter looking at the facts and figures of Africa's visa openness and which countries are starting to open up. There was a strong focus on the top performers in 2017, including Seychelles, which offers visa-free access to all Africans. The high levels of interest reflect how visa openness affects everyone on the continent including business travellers, students, tourists and investors.

Countries and regions looking to open up on visas



Ethiopia

■ **2018 Index ranking: no.50** (no.49 in 2017, and no.46 in 2016).

Ethiopia automated its visa application system and announced a decision to liberalize visas for African travelers. The announcement was made by Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed in May 2018³⁹ and has been widely welcomed in African policy and media circles.

"#A relaxed visa regime will enhance both #Ethiopia's openness and will allow the country to harness the significant stopover transit traffic of @flyethiopian."

Fitsum Arega
Chief of Staff to the Prime Minister, Ethiopia⁴⁰

The Main Department for Nationality and Immigration Affairs is also modernising the visa process, with global travellers able to apply for eVisas at <https://www.evisa.gov.et/#/home>.



Namibia

■ **2018 Index ranking: no.38** (no.36 in 2017, and no.38 in 2016).

Namibia moved ahead to liberalise its visa policy framework in October 2017, with a decision for all Africans to be issued visas on arrival, as part of a wider goal to remove visa requirements altogether.⁴¹ This follows earlier plans to allow SADC citizens to access the country visa-free.

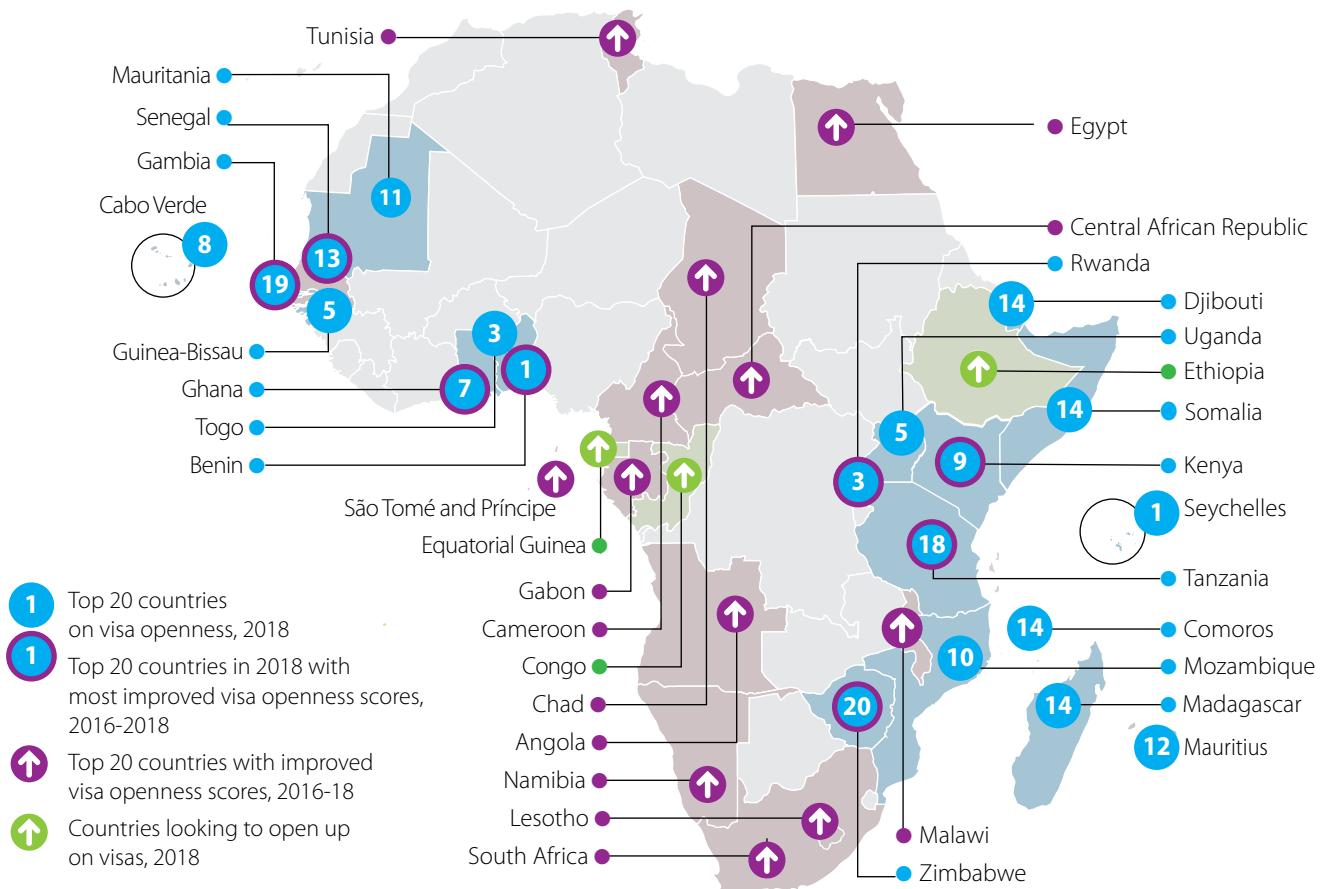
Since 2016, African diplomat and official passport holders can enter the country without a visa, following President Hage Geingob's announcement citing the value of African unity.

CEMAC

The Central African Economic and Monetary Union (CEMAC) has ratified free movement of people as of October 2017, allowing citizens from the six member states – Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and the Republic of Congo – to travel visa-free.⁴²

The move is re-energising integration in the region, with a focus on biometric technology, coordinating security services and respect for different labour regulations.⁴³ Two thirds of CEMAC members are in the top 20 improvers on visa openness between 2016-2018. The decision will support CEMAC members with low visa openness scores to move up the Index.

Visa openness in Africa: top performers and reformers, 2016-2018



Country	Visa openness rank, 2018	●	↑	↑
Angola	42		●	
Benin*	1	●	●	
Cabo Verde	8	●		
Cameroon	42	●	●	
Central African Republic	35	●	●	
Chad	37	●	●	
Comoros	14	●		
Congo, Republic	39		●	
Djibouti	14	●		
Egypt	48		●	
Ethiopia	50		●	
Equatorial Guinea	54		●	
Gabon	41	●	●	
Gambia	19	●	●	
Ghana	7	●	●	
Guinea-Bissau	5	●		
Kenya*	9	●	●	
Lesotho	32		●	

*See case studies p.16-18.

Country	Visa openness rank, 2018	●	↑	↑
Madagascar	14	●		
Malawi	22		●	
Mauritania	11	●		
Mauritius	12	●		
Mozambique	10	●		
Namibia	38		●	●
Rwanda*	3	●	●	
São Tomé and Príncipe	42		●	
Senegal*	13	●	●	
Seychelles	1	●		
Somalia	14	●		
South Africa	34		●	
Tanzania	18	●	●	
Togo	3	●		
Tunisia	24		●	
Uganda	5	●		
Zimbabwe*	20	●	●	

Global context for visa openness

Border policies and migration continued to dominate global headlines across North America and Europe in 2017 and into 2018. Political debates on immigration centred on measures to close down borders, with the backdrop of the ongoing refugee crisis in the Mediterranean. The numbers show that in recent years, nine of the top 10 countries for arrivals by sea to Europe were African.⁴⁴ A range of international initiatives moved ahead to tackle the flow of migration, including the Joint Valletta Action Plan and the EU's External Investment Plan.

In Africa, the factors underpinning mobility on the continent took centre-stage in 2018 with the meeting of the High-Level Panel on Migration⁴⁵ and an IOM/AUC study being published on the benefits and challenges of free movement of people.⁴⁶ At the same time, the AU declared 2019 as the African Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons. The African policy solutions underway, including on visa openness, show how greater mobility brings fresh opportunities for people within Africa. This, in turn, is challenging the prevailing narrative that prospects can only improve by moving away from the continent.

Globally, people are increasingly on the move for travel and tourism as consumer spending rises. The sector, which supports one in ten jobs worldwide, saw growth of 4.6% in 2017.⁴⁷ Against this backdrop, in June 2018 African countries voiced the need to drive sustainable tourism development, measuring impact with data.⁴⁸ Innovation, entrepreneurship and technology are helping to build a sustainable, resilient tourism industry across Africa⁴⁹ – elements, which are supported by promoting more liberal visa regimes on the continent.

Visa openness solutions in 2018+

Visa on arrival for Africans

Visa-free regional blocs

Regional bloc visas

Multi-year visas after assessing applicant

Promoting positive reciprocity

(for citizens of countries that relaxed visa requirements to benefit from similar requirements when visiting other African countries)

Opening up on visas unilaterally

Simplifying the visa process:
documents required, fees, processing time,
online applications
(introducing eVisas can help to facilitate visitor access)

Improving access to information:
online and in different languages

Travel Document Solutions

Regional travel using regional passports or national identity cards

African passport for business people

(issued by competent authority to strict criteria)

African passport for all African citizens

(issued by national authorities to follow the African Union passport rolled out in 2016)



Forward look

So, what's next for visa openness in Africa? The upward trend of African countries starting to liberalise their visa policies for other Africans seems set to continue, as momentum gathers across regional blocs and the continent as a whole, in line with the Free Movement Protocol.

2018 was a landmark chapter in Africa's integration story. With the African Continental Free Trade Area and the Single African Air Transport Market, closer cooperation and shared investment in Africa's economic growth and sustainable development was again reinforced. Together with progress on the continent's infrastructure needs and business reforms, visa openness represents a valuable win-win policy tool that will help to bolster integration.

"Economic integration thus responds not only to aspirations born out of Pan-Africanism, but also to a practical imperative linked to the economic viability of the continent... Our peoples, our business community and our youth, in particular, cannot wait any longer to see the lifting of the barriers that divide our continent."

Moussa Faki Mahamat
African Union Commission Chairperson⁵⁰

Popular options for countries opening up their visa regimes since 2016 included offering more visas on arrival, being part of visa-free regional blocs, and promoting positive reciprocity. A combination of visa openness and travel document solutions are working for the Index top performers to attract more arrivals, increase investment levels, and boost tourism. More countries can start to take steps to enjoy the benefits of open visa policies.

The questions will be: how are people moving once they enjoy greater access across Africa? Do more open-visa policies translate into practical easier access options for African travellers when it comes to the time, cost and procedures that are involved? What is the time lag between a country announcing a decision to open up its borders and it coming into force? Is information on visas readily available, online, in different languages, and regularly updated?

Follow, and be part of, the debate on the Africa Visa Openness Index www.visaopenness.org

Africa Visa Openness Index fourth edition

African citizens need to be aware of the different opportunities open visa policies offer them, which countries are the most open on the continent and what access they allow. The online www.visaopenness.org platform, which went live in May 2017, aims to promote greater research, advocacy and policy dialogue on visa openness solutions across Africa. Updated on a yearly basis, over 16,250 unique visitors⁵¹ have already visited the platform.

The fourth edition of the Index will track how people are able to travel once they have liberal visa access, based on cost, time and processes involved, to flesh out the story behind the African traveller's experience. Sharing information on visa realities across Africa can inspire further reforms. Case stories will capture how countries are using smart systems and digital technology to reform their visa regimes. And they will set out the visa openness trajectory, that starts with a country's decision to open up on visas, and ends at the border.

Annex 1. Visa openness in Africa: country scores and ranking

COUNTRY	VISA OPENNESS INDICATORS (by number of African countries)			Score	Rank
	No visa required	Visa on arrival	Visa required*		
Seychelles	53	0	0	1.000	1
Benin	53	0	0	1.000	1
Rwanda	15	38	0	0.857	3
Togo	15	38	0	0.857	3
Guinea Bissau	14	39	0	0.853	5
Uganda	18	34	1	0.853	5
Ghana	17	35	1	0.849	7
Cabo Verde	16	36	1	0.845	8
Kenya	18	33	2	0.838	9
Mozambique	9	44	0	0.834	10
Mauritania	8	45	0	0.830	11
Mauritius	27	21	5	0.826	12
Senegal	43	0	10	0.811	13
Comoros	0	53	0	0.800	14
Djibouti	0	53	0	0.800	14
Madagascar	0	53	0	0.800	14
Somalia	0	53	0	0.800	14
Tanzania	16	26	11	0.694	18
Gambia	28	0	25	0.528	19
Zimbabwe	17	10	26	0.472	20
Burkina Faso	16	11	26	0.468	21
Malawi	14	12	27	0.445	22
Zambia	13	12	28	0.426	23
Tunisia	22	0	31	0.415	24
Côte d'Ivoire	21	0	32	0.396	25
Mali	20	1	32	0.392	26
Guinea	20	0	33	0.377	27
Niger	18	0	35	0.340	28
Nigeria	17	1	35	0.336	29
Botswana	17	0	36	0.321	30
eSwatini (Swaziland)	17	0	36	0.321	30
Lesotho	16	0	37	0.302	32
Sierra Leone	15	1	37	0.298	33
South Africa	15	0	38	0.283	34
Central African Republic	14	0	39	0.264	35
Liberia	14	0	39	0.264	35
Chad	13	1	39	0.260	37
Namibia	13	0	40	0.245	38
Republic of Congo	5	8	40	0.215	39
Morocco	9	0	44	0.170	40
Gabon	8	1	44	0.166	41
Angola	7	0	46	0.132	42
Cameroon	7	0	46	0.132	42
São Tomé and Príncipe	7	0	46	0.132	42
Democratic Republic of Congo	4	3	46	0.121	45
Algeria	6	0	47	0.113	46
Burundi	6	0	47	0.113	46
Egypt	0	5	48	0.075	48
South Sudan	0	5	48	0.075	48
Ethiopia	2	1	50	0.053	50
Eritrea	1	1	51	0.034	51
Libya	1	0	52	0.019	52
Sudan	0	1	52	0.015	53
Equatorial Guinea	0	0	53	0.000	54
Western Sahara	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	54

Scores range from 0 to 1 (highest)

* Visa required means a visa has to be obtained before departure and is not an eVisa.

Source: IATA (June-July 2018)

Notes

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The Africa Visa Openness Report 2018

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