



Airline	Flight#	Destination	Scheduled time	Status	Updated Counters time
4Z314	Maun		19:15		A 24-30
4Z382	Harare		10:20+		A 75-79
4Z326	Windhoek		10:25+		A 05-06
4Z348	Walvis Bay		10:30+		A 05-06
ETD46	Addis Ababa		14:35+		A 05-06

Airline	Flight#	Destination	Scheduled time	Status	Updated Counters time
LH577	Frankfurt		17:45+		A 80-89
TK045	Istanbul		17:50+		A 75-79
QR1370	Doha		19:15+		A 35-39
KL598	Amsterdam		23:05+		



Africa Visa Openness Report 2022



*"We need to break down all barriers that impede the free movement of people across the continent, especially that of workers. This is vital for promoting investment."*¹

Akinwumi A. Adesina, President
African Development Bank Group

*"Agenda 2063 sought to create a prosperous Africa whose development was people-driven, relying on the potential offered by African people, especially its women and youth."*²

H.E. Dr. Monique Nsanzabaganwa, Deputy Chairperson
African Union Commission



Highlights from the 2022 AVOI

Three countries now offer visa-free entry to Africans of all other countries.

In 2016 and 2017, only one country did so.

The aggregate AVOI score continues its upward trajectory.

36 of 54 countries have improved or maintained their score since 2016.

13 of 2022's top-20 performers have a higher score today than 6 years ago (2016).

The continent's aggregate AVOI score now surpasses its pre-COVID mark in 2019.

In 2022, the AVOI rebounded significantly.

Five of 2022's top-20 performers improved their score since 2021.

Only one top-20 performer's score has declined since last year.

Lower-income countries continue to make progress.

Nine top-20 performers are low-income countries; three of them are landlocked.

Another nine top-20 performers are lower-middle-income countries.

More countries now offer an e-visa.

24 countries offer an e-visa in 2022, compared to nine countries in 2016.



Africa Visa Openness Index

The Africa Visa Openness Index (AVOI) measures the extent to which African countries are open to visitors from other African countries. The index analyzes each country's visa requirements to show which countries on the continent 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 do not need a visa to enter. Each country is then assigned a visa openness score and ranked accordingly.



First published in 2016, the AVOI also tracks changes in countries' scores over time. This shows how countries' policies are evolving as regards the freedom of movement across

Africa, and how visa-related policy changes can have a significant impact on the ease with which citizens of African countries can travel to other countries, and on countries' ranking on the AVOI. The report also notes other relevant integration developments on the African continent and links these to the movement of persons, where such changes are often complementary to, or indeed dependent on one another.

Data for this year's edition was collected in July and August. The main sources of information were the International Air Transport Association and countries' official websites.

Acknowledgements

The *Africa Visa Openness Report 2022* is the seventh edition of a publication that has been produced yearly since 2016. It presents the findings of the Africa Visa Openness Index, a joint initiative of the African Development Bank and the African Union Commission.

The past two years have confronted Africa and the world with many challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic demanded that countries act fast to contain the spread of a virus that was not yet fully understood. People's livelihoods and social structures were severely disrupted; lives were lost and mobility was constrained, both nationally and across borders.

Africa demonstrated remarkable resilience during the height of the crisis. Now, global cooperation on medical interventions has restored a measure of normality to everyday life. Business activities have resumed, health systems have been strengthened, and people are travelling once again.

The Africa Visa Openness Index has tracked the evolution of visa regimes on the African continent from before the pandemic to today. As the 2022 report shows, African countries are dismantling many of the measures imposed during the pandemic. Indeed, on the whole, the continent has returned to a level of visa openness last seen just before the pandemic began.

This report unpacks some of these developments. It highlights progress in countries and regions, and suggests where Africa can advance further still. In doing so, it advocates for freedom of movement as essential to integrating the continent and fostering prosperity, security, and inclusive growth.

The Africa Visa Openness Index would not exist without the support of senior management of the African Development Bank and the African Union Commission, the Vice Presidency Regional Development, Integration and Service Delivery and the Bureau of the Deputy Chairperson respectively. The two institutions have championed free movement of persons on the continent.

Sincere appreciation is extended to Zodwa Florence Mabuza, who led the Bank's production of this report, and to Gbangele Coulibaly and Johanna Pangeiko Nautwima, whose assistance with data collection and analysis was invaluable. I would also like to thank Dr Emile Rwagasana, the Deputy Chief of Staff at the Bureau of the Deputy Chairperson of the AUC, for his continued support and guidance.

Special thanks also to the consultants who produced the report: Eckart Naumann for writing, Jennifer Petrela for editing, and Peggy King Cointepas for design and graphics.

Jean-Guy Afrika

Acting Director, Regional Integration Coordination Office
African Development Bank

Methodology

How the AVOI calculates each country's score

Scores and rankings. AVOI scores range from 0 to 1, where 0 designates countries with the most restrictive visa policies and 1 designates countries with the most welcoming policies.

The higher a country's index score, the more "visa-open" is the country and the higher it ranks.

Categories and weightings. To calculate each country's score, the AVOI assesses the country's visa policy vis-à-vis each of the other 53 countries in the continent and classifies each policy in one of three categories. The AVOI gives each category a weighting:

Category	Weighting
Visa required before travel	0
Visa on arrival	0.8
No visa required	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 required before travel, visa on arrival, no visa required).
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: Visa openness score = [(% of African countries whose nationals must obtain a visa before travelling x 0) + (% of African countries whose nationals may obtain a visa on arrival x 0.8) + (% of African countries whose nationals are not required to obtain a visa x 1)] / 100

An Example

Country X requires the nationals of 13 countries to obtain a visa before travel. It allows the nationals of 30 countries to obtain a visa on arrival, and it allows the nationals of 10 other countries to enter its territory visa-free. Country X's score is calculated as follows:

Visa openness score for Country X = ((visa required before travel: 13/53 x 0) + (visa upon arrival: 30/53 x 0.8) + (no visa required: 10/53 x 1) / 100 = 0.642

Visas

Visa openness refers to the ease with which visitors are authorized to enter their country of destination.

A more **visa-open country** has a liberal or relaxed visa policy for visitors, meaning that visitors either do not need a visa to enter its territory or can obtain a visa upon arrival.

A **visa-restrictive country** requires visitors to obtain a visa before they travel. Visitors might obtain the visa from an embassy, a consulate, or another source.

The **visa openness rate** refers to the percentage of other countries in Africa whose citizens are permitted to enter a country's territory without having obtained a visa before arriving. Earlier editions of the AVOI referred to this as the "liberal access rate."

Abbreviations

AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AfDB	African Development Bank Group
AMU	Arab Maghreb Union
AVOI	Africa Visa Openness Index
AU	African Union
CEN-SAD	Community of Sahel-Saharan States
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
COVID-19	Infectious disease caused by coronavirus
EAC	East African Community
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
E-visa	Electronic visa
GDP	Gross domestic product
IATA	International Air Transport Association
IGAD	Inter-Governmental Authority on Development
PFMP	Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons
REC	Regional economic community
SAATM	Single African Air Transport Market
SADC	Southern African Development Community
USD	United States dollars

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www.visaopenness.org

THE AVOI'S ONLINE PLATFORM summarizes 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.



GUEST INTERVIEWS with champions of visa openness in Africa are posted at: <https://www.visaopenness.org/AVOI-blog/>

"Human mobility under the AfCFTA: A condition for success"

Trudi Hartzenberg
Executive Director, Trade Law Centre (tralac)

"The Free Movement of Persons Protocol: Ways to move forward"

Alan Hirsch
Emeritus Professor of Development Policy and Practice at the Nelson Mandela School of Public Governance, University of Cape Town



Foreword African Development Bank

Africa—and indeed the world—made great strides towards returning to post-pandemic normality in 2021–2022. The vast majority of countries eased restrictions on movement. Industries that bore the brunt of the pandemic—tourism, hospitality, and others—are rebounding, and travel has surged, both



within Africa and around the world. The increase in travel is driven in large part by pent-up personal demand, but also by the realization that many businesses depend on human movement, and that investment thrives on it.

The Africa Visa Openness Index (AVOI) has been tracking visa openness as a measure of the freedom of movement since 2016. This year's edition—the seventh—shows many African countries having greatly simplified their visa regime over the past year. Visa openness now matches levels last seen at the beginning of the

pandemic. Indeed, compared to 2016, when the AVOI was first published, more than 60% of countries have improved their AVOI score. A significant majority of African countries now offer visa-free travel to at least five other African countries, and more countries are investing in technology that allows visitors to obtain an e-visa before they leave home.

In many cases, Africa's regional economic communities (RECs) are leading the way in facilitating free movement of people. For the first time, the AVOI analyzes visa openness by REC. The findings celebrate those RECs that are doing well and encourages the others to do better.

The African Development Bank recognizes the effort and progress made by RECs and regional member countries on human mobility, and is committed to supporting them as they maintain the momentum. Around the continent, the Bank is financing the construction of one-stop border posts, inter-regional roads and railways, and ports. We are supporting countries and regions as they develop policies that facilitate the movement of professionals, tradespeople, and investors from abroad. And we are promoting best practices in trade facilitation for public and private actors alike.

We understand that freeing the movement of people creates a more favorable business environment, attracts investment, and stimulates intra- and inter-regional trade. It also promotes social cohesion and improves African citizens' quality of life. Africa deserves nothing less.

Marie-Laure Akin-Olugbade

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

Over the past years, Africa has moved closer to inclusive and sustainable development for the benefit of all its people. The COVID-19 pandemic created hardships and exposed global imbalances but, it also affirmed one of Africa’s foremost characteristics: resilience.



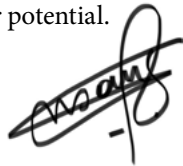
Most of the restrictions imposed by countries to curb the spread of the pandemic have now been lifted and countries are embracing new forms of normality. The African Union’s flagship project—the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)—moved forward as well. Most tariff liberalization offers have been exchanged, and negotiations on outstanding rules of origin are nearing completion. In a historic milestone, trading began among a pilot group of countries whose traders had never before enjoyed preferential access to each other’s markets.

Yet barriers still remain. One of the most important is the free movement of persons. Restricting Africans ability to move across borders, right to residence and right to establishment, impedes trade and stifles industrialization. It discourages innovation and stymies the formation of regional value chains.

It is not enough to agree on rules of origin that promote “Made in Africa” products. For the AfCFTA to succeed, non-tariff barriers to trade must be dismantled, too. Among other things, Africans must be free to move around the continent without being denied the right to board on planes, applying for costly and time-consuming visas, which are not readily available electronically, to study, trade, and develop their businesses.

This year’s Africa Visa Openness Index (AVOI) reveals that African countries are rising up to the challenge. Ten countries improved their AVOI score, and forty stayed steady. A notable number of restrictions on travel were reversed and, more countries offer an e-visa today than ever before. On average, the continent’s visa regimes are more open than when the first AVOI report was published in 2016, and as open as they were just before the pandemic struck.

There is momentum and an opportunity to make important headway over the next year. Doing so will bring Africa closer to attaining one of Agenda 2063’s aspirations: a prosperous, integrated continent where all Africans can realize their potential.



H.E. Dr. Monique Nsanzabaganwa
Deputy Chairperson
African Union Commission

Post-pandemic travel

RESTRICTIONS, RE-OPENINGS, AND THE EMERGING E-VISA

An overview

Amid the uncertainties of the unfolding COVID-19 crisis, most countries restricted movement, both domestically and for international travel. Restrictions on international travel ranged from closing entire borders to quarantines, screening measures, and bans on visitors from countries deemed “high risk.” Restrictions on movement within countries were often strict as well: prohibitions on travelling between provinces, bans on non-essential movement, curfews, and rules that limited gatherings.

*"Tourism in Africa has a long history of bouncing back. And it has shown its resilience again. Many destinations are reporting strong arrival numbers. But we must look beyond just the numbers and rethink how tourism works so that our sector can deliver on its unique potential to transform lives, drive sustainable growth and provide opportunity everywhere in Africa."*³

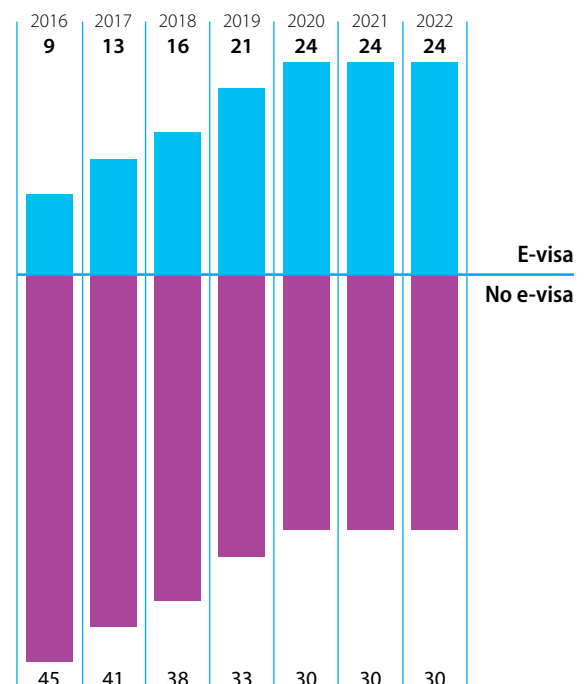
Zurab Pololikashvili, Secretary-General
United Nations World Tourism Organization

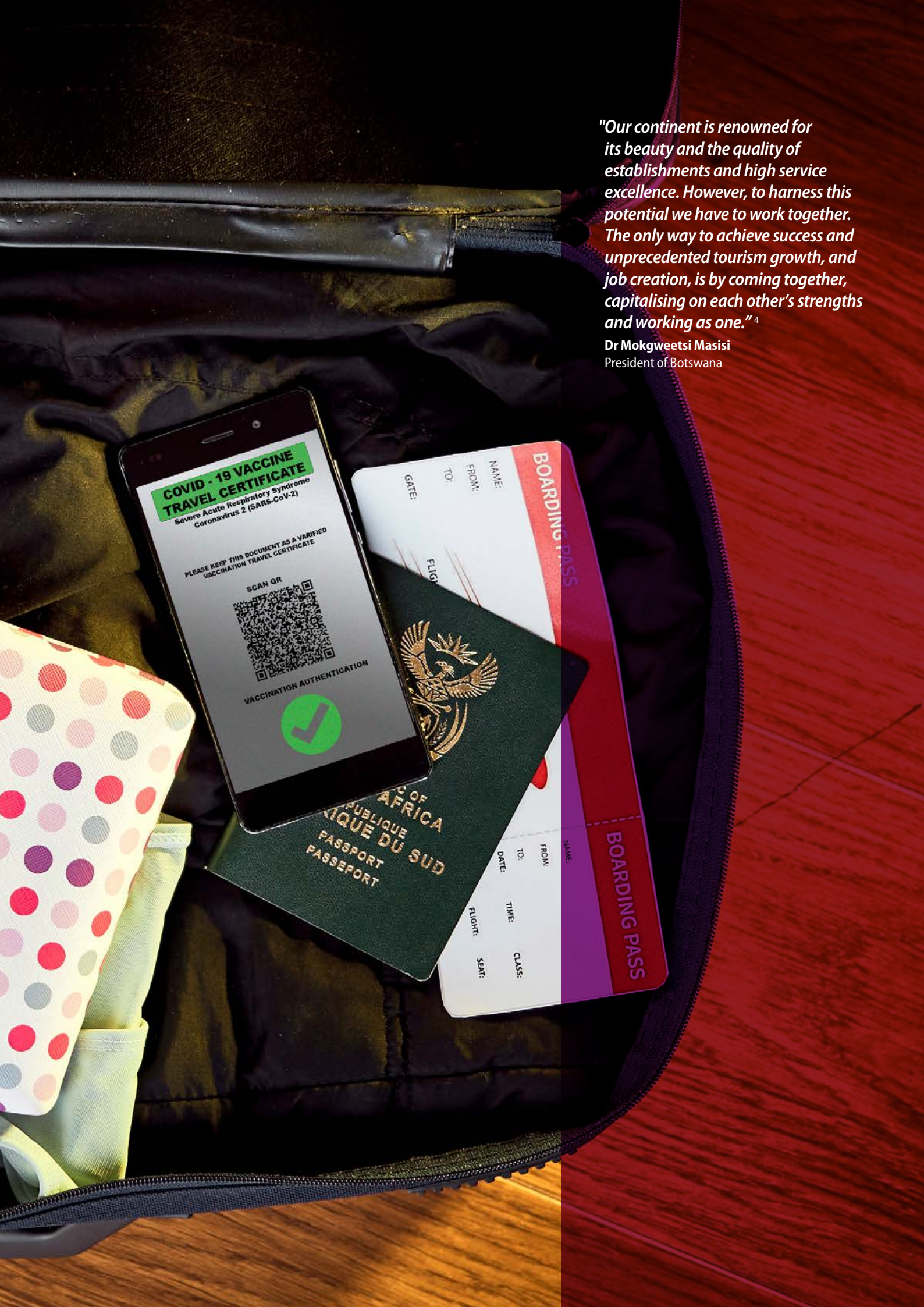
The restrictions on international movement happened quickly, generally before domestic restrictions. For example, at the start of February 2020, as reports grew of the potential severity and transmissibility of the virus, a handful of African states imposed screening measures at international entry points. Two months later, most African countries had implemented an international travel ban and closed their borders. By the start of 2021, most countries had lifted these bans and used screening measures to mitigate rather than eliminate risk. For the remainder of the year and into 2022, selected travel bans and border closures were implemented in line with the perceived risks of further waves of infection and the discovery of new variants and sub-variants, some of which appeared to be more transmissible than previous ones.

Later, countries all over the world began restricting movement according to local risk factors and domestic assessments, rather than coordinated regional policies that followed international guidance. By mid-2021, some African countries dropped all restrictions on international movement and merely screened incoming visitors, while others still barred international arrivals. In 2022, the situation remains fluid, with countries implementing—and sometimes abolishing—travel restrictions on short notice. In some cases, this affects mandatory health certificates and vaccination pass requirements.

Through it all, the number of countries in Africa that offer an e-visa increased from 21 in 2019 to 24 in 2020–2022. The total has since remained unchanged; South Africa and Morocco introduced e-visas in 2022, while at time of writing, Cabo Verde and Guinea Bissau’s e-visa portals had become inaccessible.

The growing use of e-visas, 2016–2022





*"Our continent is renowned for its beauty and the quality of establishments and high service excellence. However, to harness this potential we have to work together. The only way to achieve success and unprecedented tourism growth, and job creation, is by coming together, capitalising on each other's strengths and working as one."*⁴

Dr Mokgweetsi Masisi
President of Botswana

*"The potential growth of jobs and wages inside the African Continental Free Trade Area might contribute to expanding possibilities for all Africans. Around 68 million people should be able to escape moderate poverty thanks to the AfCFTA, which will also increase the competitiveness of African nations. But for the agreement to fully benefit, proper implementation will be essential, as well thorough monitoring of repercussions on all workers—men and women, skilled and unskilled—across all countries and sectors."*⁵

Albert Zeufack, Country Director for Angola, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and São Tomé and Príncipe
The World Bank

E-visas: what are they and how do they work?

A visa is an authorization for the holder to travel to the issuing country, where local immigration authorities decide whether to allow the traveller to enter. E-visas have grown more popular as more and more countries adopt them. But what is an e-visa and how does it differ from other visas that travellers may need to enter a foreign country?

Features of a traditional visa

Historically, the most common way of obtaining a visa was for the applicant (the traveller) to apply for a visa from the destination country's local diplomatic office—its embassy or consulate—before the applicant left home. The application process sometimes requires an interview and the submission of paper copies of supporting documents: travel tickets, bank statements, accommodation bookings, proof of health insurance, etc. The applicant also submits their original travel documents (passport), which the diplomatic office retains until it decides whether to grant the visa. If the visa is granted, it is attached to the applicant's passport and the passport is returned to the applicant. Applicants sometimes hire a visa service company to arrange the logistical aspects of the application process, such as delivering the applicant's passport and documents to the diplomatic office. Applying for a visa this way can be cumbersome and time-consuming.

Features of a visa on arrival

In the case of countries that offer a visa on arrival, the applicant may travel to the destination country and apply for a visa from the immigration authorities upon arriving at the airport or land border. Here it is imperative that the applicant be familiar with any restrictions associated with this process, as a destination country may not offer a visa on arrival for every type of traveller or for all lengths of stay. The country may, for example, offer only tourist or transit visas on arrival, but not business visas. It may also restrict visas on arrival to short stays, or to travellers of certain nationalities. The benefits of a visa on arrival are that it need not be obtained in advance and generally involves simpler logistics and lower costs.

Features of an e-visa

An e-visa is a paperless version of a traditional visa.

The application for an e-visa takes place virtually. The applicant completes an online form on which they indicate their identity and the purpose and length of their stay. The applicant also submits copies of their supporting documents online.

Some countries limit e-visas to applicants from certain nationalities, especially during the trial phase of their e-visa program. For example, South Africa introduced an e-visa in February 2022 and made it available to applicants from 14 countries, half of which are in Africa.

24 African countries now offer travellers the option of an e-visa, up from nine countries in 2016. Two countries introduced an e-visa over the past year, and others are reportedly in development. The e-visa portals of two more countries, included in earlier versions of the AVOI, remained offline during this year's reporting period and are not included in the totals here.

Benefits and best practices

E-visas benefit travellers in several ways:

- The applicant applies for an e-visa online, from their office, their home, or another place convenient to them. This saves time and energy, and in the case of a health crisis (like the COVID pandemic), is safer for everyone.
- Because e-visas are issued or denied before the applicant travels, they reduce the risk of the applicant travelling to a country only to be turned back. This takes some of the anxiety out of the visa application process.
- The applicant need not leave their passport with the destination country's diplomatic office as part of their application. This allows the applicant to travel while waiting for their application to be processed, and reduces the risk that their passport will be lost.

For the issuing country, e-visas set the stage for capturing and storing travellers' information more efficiently and communicating decisions about visas online. This dispenses consular staff from scheduling interviews, vetting and recording travellers' data, printing forms and visas, and taking care of other logistics. E-visas are particularly useful for countries that have fewer diplomatic missions abroad. Also, because applicants apply for an e-visa online, e-visas allow countries to query travellers' information electronically through a national database.

For e-visas to function well, the issuing authorities must create a platform that encrypts applicants' payment information. They must also address concerns about document forgery, constraints with information and communications infrastructure, and the inability to collect biometric data remotely. Some of these concerns can be addressed by developing close working partnerships with airlines (airline staff can be tasked with cross-checking travellers' documentation) and by limiting the payment of fees to bank cards, which have usually been verified by a bank.

An effective e-visa system enhances security, facilitates access to travel, and greatly enhances the efficiency of the visa application process.

*"Travelers have told us that barriers to travel remain. Countries with complex visa procedures are losing the economic benefits that these travelers bring. Where countries have removed visa requirements, tourism and travel economies have thrived. And for countries requiring certain categories of travelers to get visas, taking advantage of traveler willingness to use online processes and share information in advance would be a win-win solution."*⁶

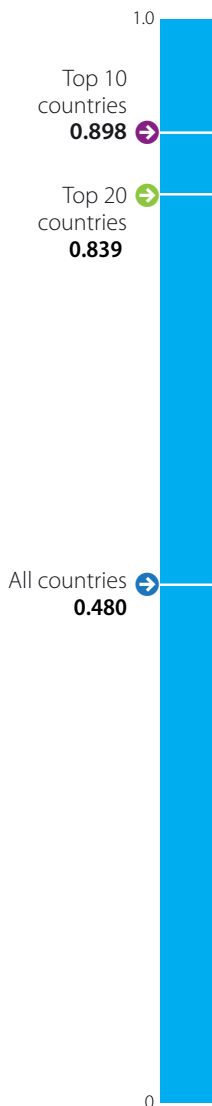
Nick Careen, Senior Vice President for Operations, Safety and Security
International Air Transport Association



Visa Openness in Africa

2022 FINDINGS

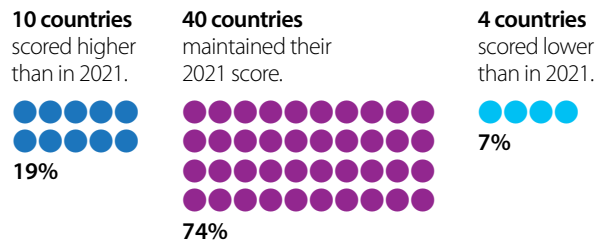
The continent's average scores, 2022



The 2021 edition of the AVOI noted several countries back-sliding on their ranking from the previous year. Countries were dealing with global uncertainty around the pandemic's impacts on health and the economy, and many governments restricted travel. Some changed their visa regime.

This year has seen several positive developments. Ten countries improved their score on visa openness, and 40 maintained their score. Only four countries recorded a decrease. The continent's aggregate score improved by 8%, compensating for last year's downturn.

Changes in AVOI scores, 2021–2022



Visa-free travel

- 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.
- 42 countries offer visa-free travel to the nationals of at least 5 other African countries.
- 3 African countries offer visa-free travel to the citizens of all other African countries.

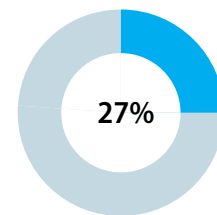
Visas on arrival

- 29 countries—more than half of the continent— now offer a visa on arrival to the nationals of at least one other African country.
- 24 countries offer a visa on arrival to the nationals of 5 or more countries.
- 14 countries offer a visa on arrival to 35 or more African countries.

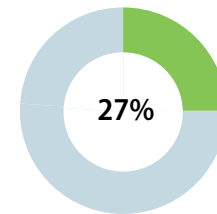
In contrast, 32 countries still require the nationals of at least half of the continent's countries to obtain a visa before travelling. Reducing this number and making it possible for more people to travel visa-free, with an e-visa, or with a visa on arrival, would make the continent significantly more open.

What proportion of African countries are open to African travellers?

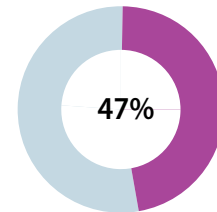
For **27%** of intra-Africa* travel, African citizens don't need a visa (up from 25% in 2021, and 20% in 2016)



For **27%** of intra-Africa* travel, African citizens can obtain a visa on arrival (up from 24% in 2021, and 25% in 2016)

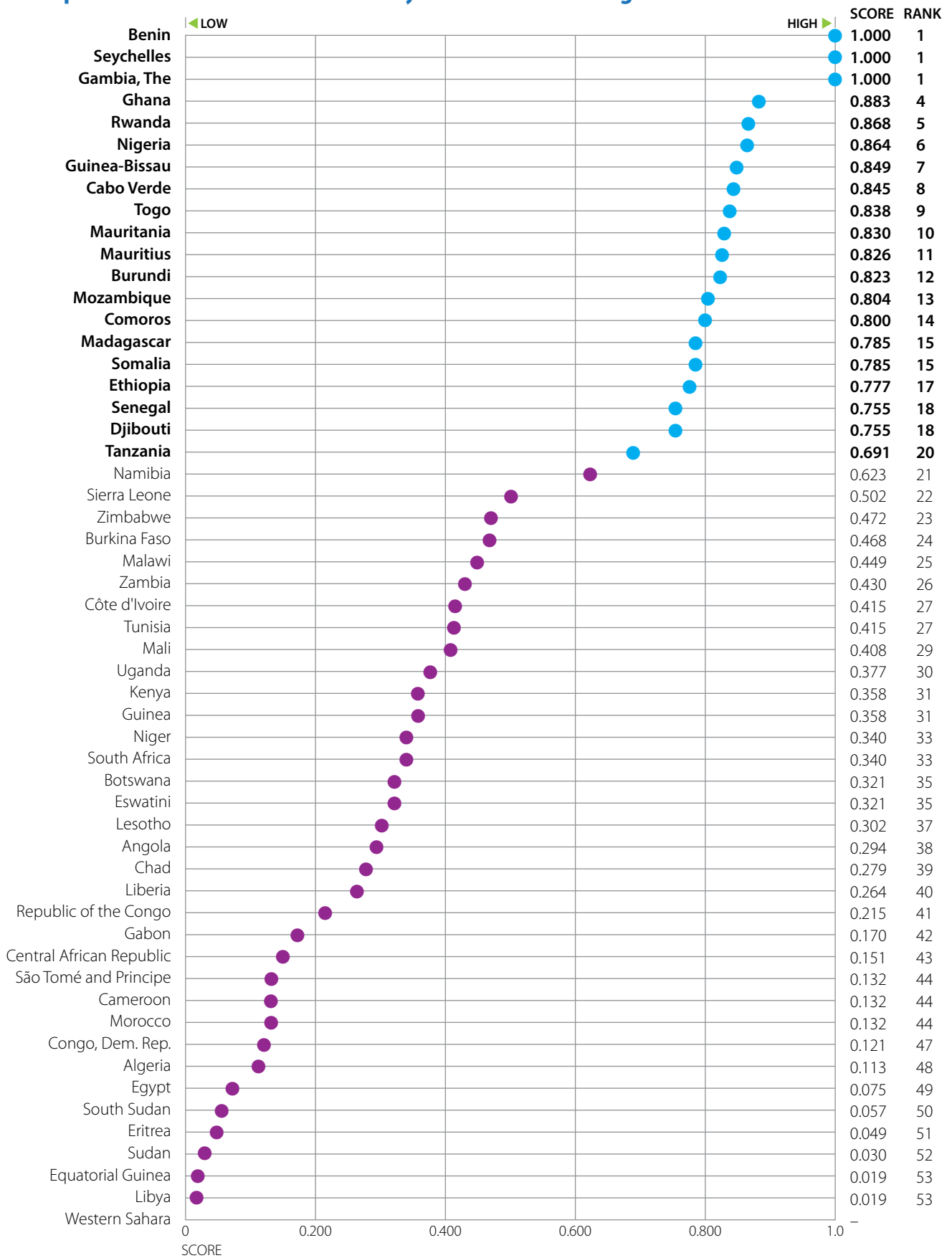


For **47%** of intra-Africa* travel, African citizens still need a visa before travelling (down from 51% in 2021, and 55% in 2016)



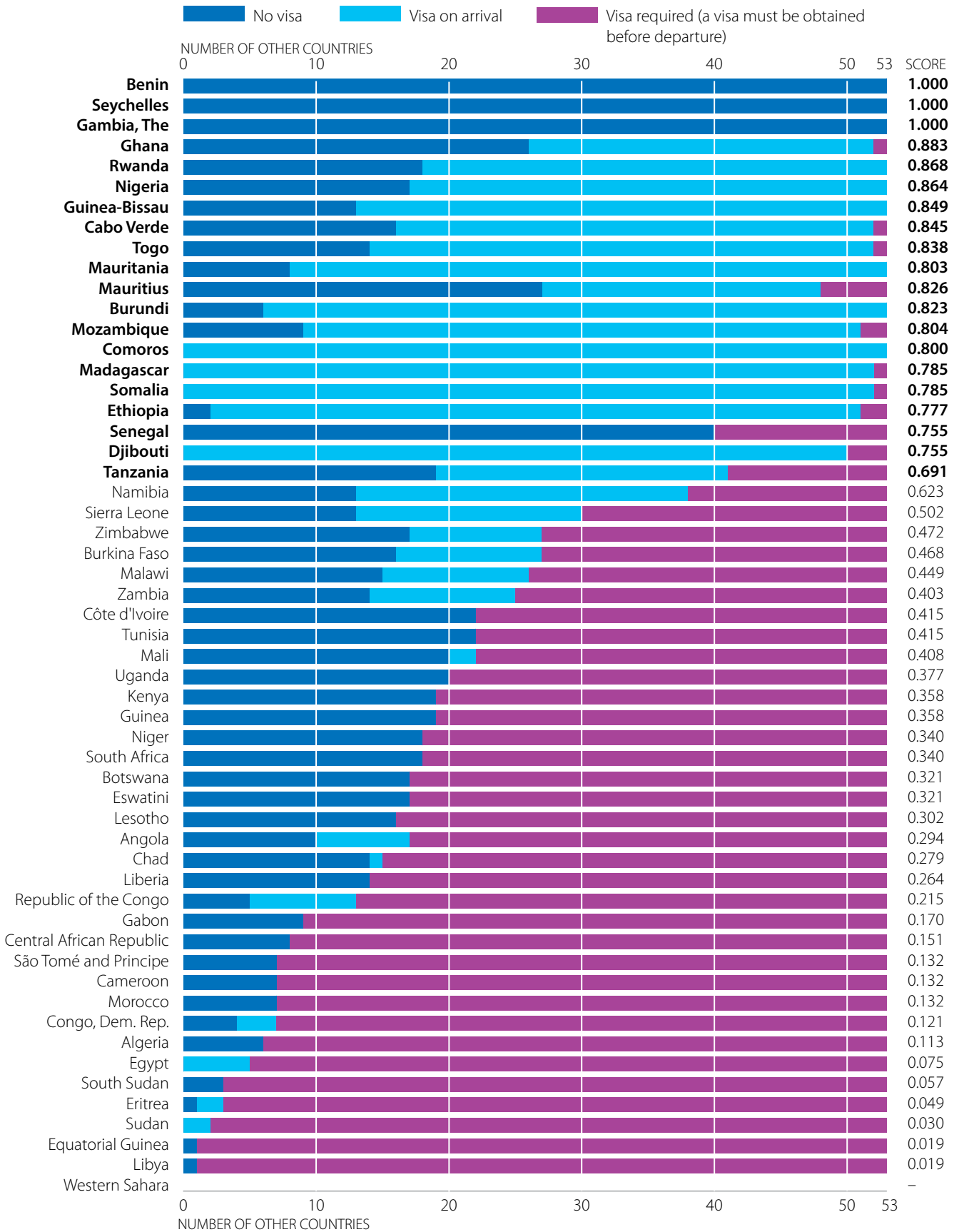
*Intra-Africa travel refers to travel by African citizens between African countries.

Visa openness in Africa 2022: Country scores and rankings



Scores range from 0–1 (highest)
 Source: Bank calculations based on IATA data, July–August 2022

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



Scores range from 0–1 (highest)

Source: Bank calculations based on IATA data, July–August 2022

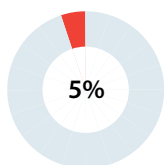
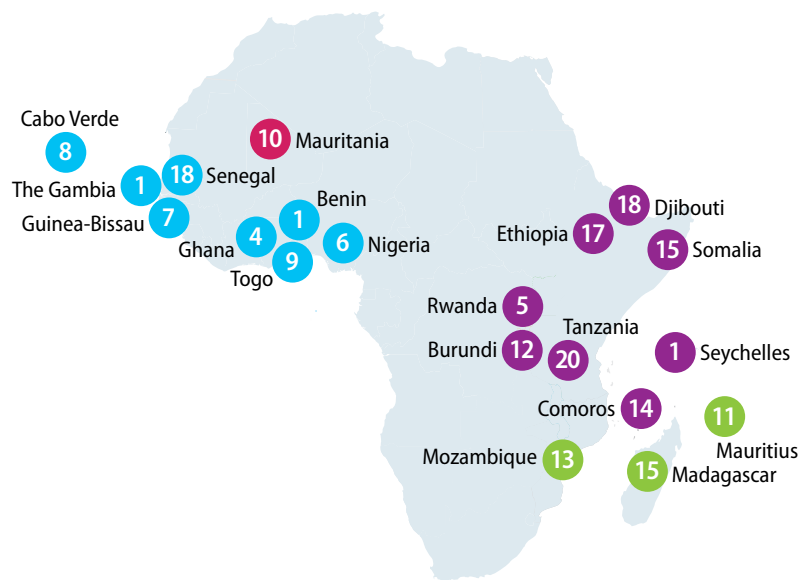
Where are Africa's top performers?

West Africa counts the largest share of top-performing countries in 2022: it is home to eight of the top 20 performers (9 in 2021), equivalent to 40% of all top performers. Of these eight countries, seven also feature among the top 10. East Africa also has eight representatives in the top 20 (it had six in 2021), with one country in the top 10.

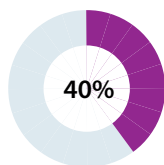
Southern Africa is home to three top-20 countries (15%), down from four in 2021.

North Africa has one country in the top 20 (5%), the same as in 2021. No Central African country ranks among the top 20 on this year's 2022 AVOI or on the AVOI of last year.

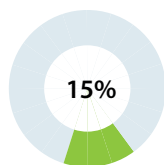
Top 20 performers, 2022



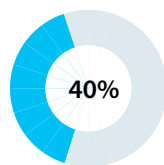
1 of the top 20 performers is in **North Africa.**



8 of the top 20 performers are in **East Africa.**



3 of the top 20 performers are in **Southern Africa.**



8 of the top 20 performers are in **West Africa.**

No Central African country ranks among the top-20 performers.

Do income levels and location play a role?

Nine of the 20 best-performing countries are low-income countries, and nine more are lower-middle-income countries. 13 of Africa's 24 low-income countries rank in the upper half of the AVOI. It is evident that more often than not, low-income countries lead Africa in adopting progressive policies that encourage human mobility.

In contrast, the two lowest-ranked countries on the AVOI are upper-middle-income countries, and five of Africa's seven upper-middle-income countries rank in the lower half of the AVOI.

Only one country in Africa—Seychelles—is classified as a high-income country. The AVOI has ranked Seychelles first since 2016, and joint first alongside Benin since 2018 and The Gambia since 2020.

18 of 2022's top-20 performers are low-income or lower-middle-income countries.

5 of 7 of Africa's upper-middle-income countries have a low visa openness score.

5 of 6 of Africa's island states are top-20 performers, with Madagascar joining the list in 2022 (the other 4 top-20 performers are Cabo Verde, Comoros, Mauritius, and Seychelles).

3 of 16 of Africa's landlocked states are among 2022's top-20 performers (Burundi, Mauritania, and Rwanda).

Three of the top-20 performers are landlocked countries, and seven of Africa's 16 landlocked countries feature in the upper half of the AVOI. Most of these countries share international borders with a number of neighbouring countries.

Visa openness in Africa

WHAT PROGRESS SINCE 2016?

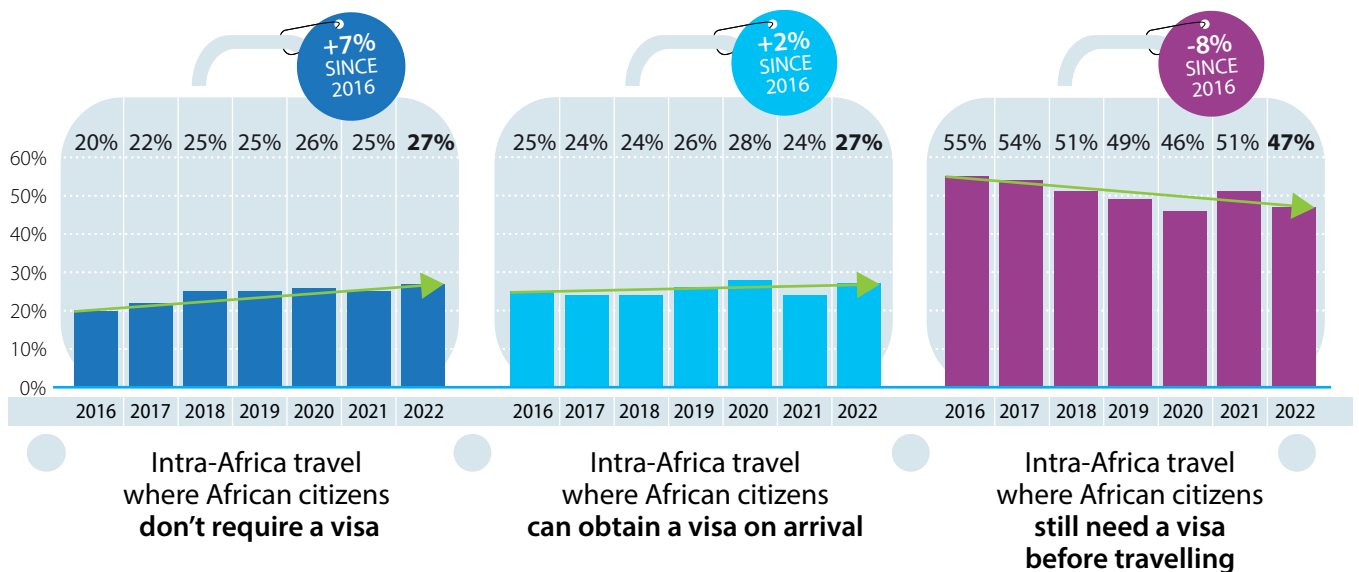
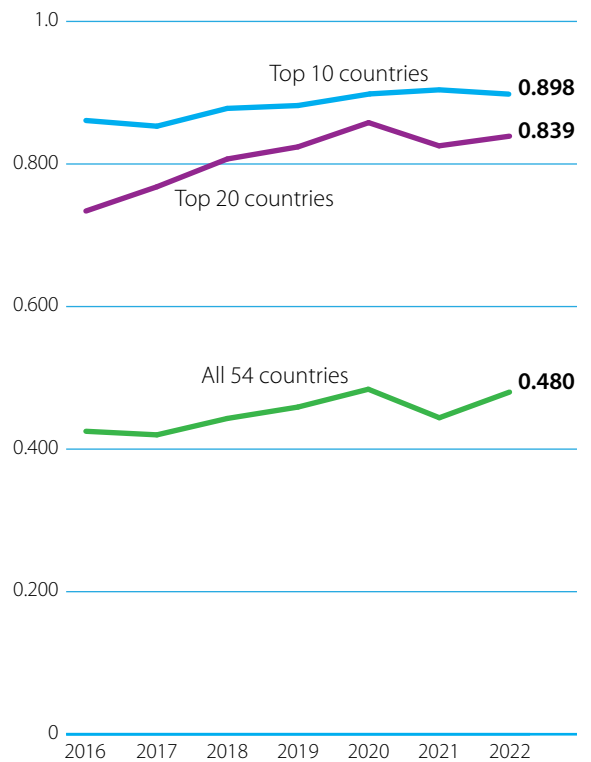
Tracking changes in visa openness 2016–2022

Overall, Africans travel more easily within Africa today than they did in 2016. For 27% of all intra-Africa travel, citizens of African countries can now travel visa-free (up from 20% in 2016), while in a further 27% of travel scenarios, a visa can be obtained on arrival (up from 25% in 2016). The number of intra-Africa travel that still requires a visa ahead of departure was 47% of the total in 2022, a marked improvement from 55% in 2016.

Changes since 2019 (the year prior to the pandemic) have been more muted: the permission to travel visa-free has increased only a little, and a visa ahead of travel is required by slightly more countries today than during the first year of the pandemic (2020). Since 2016, however, all metrics have improved, even if only a little in recent years.

These gains notwithstanding, real room for freeing the movement of people remains. And now is the time: the AfCFTA negotiations are nearing completion, and progress is being made in other areas that will do much to further integrate Africa and raise Africans' incomes. This includes liberalizing trade in services, addressing non-tariff barriers, and further implementing trade facilitation measures on the continent.

Trends in average AVOI scores, 2016–2022





"The coming into play of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) will definitely improve intra-African trade and tourism. If we see ourselves as one big market, then we would be able to create the relevant connections where we have one country trading with another as a united front to provide a service to the international traveller."⁷

Maggie Kaunda, Managing Director
Zambia Airports

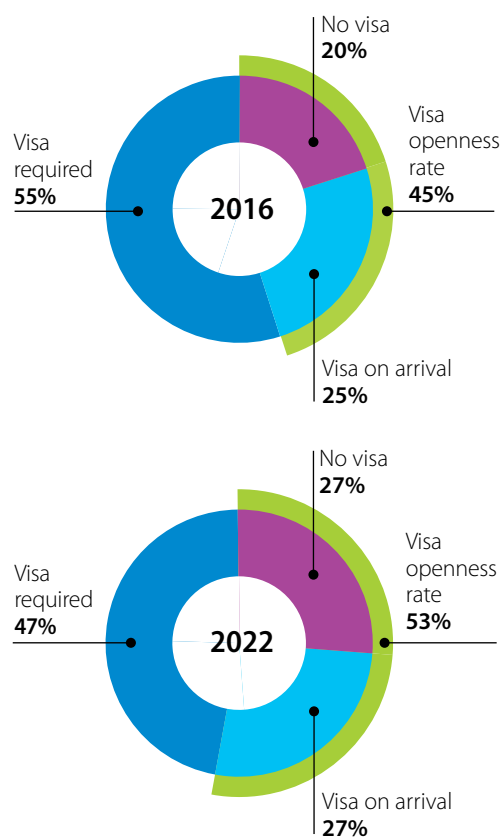


*"If we want to accelerate Africa's development, build a better business environment and achieve free movement of goods, people, services and capital, it is essential that we have a common vision to strengthen the institutional capacity of regional economic communities and regulate and harmonize policy frameworks between countries."*⁸

Jean-Guy Afrika, Acting Director, Regional Integration Coordination Office
African Development Bank

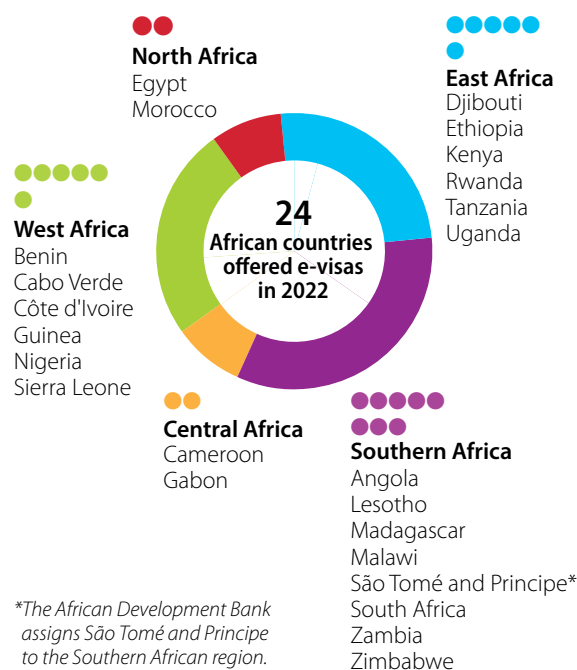
The COVID-19 pandemic has had a marked impact on business and the freedom to travel. But 2022 saw an accelerated return to international travel and visa openness in Africa, reversing the downward trend of 2021 and bringing average visa openness to a level similar to that of 2020. As a whole, the continent's visa regimes are more liberal today than they have been in any year since 2016.

Visa openness* rates, 2016 vs. 2022



* Visa openness combines the visa on arrival and visa free travel scores.
Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding.

E-visas by region, 2022



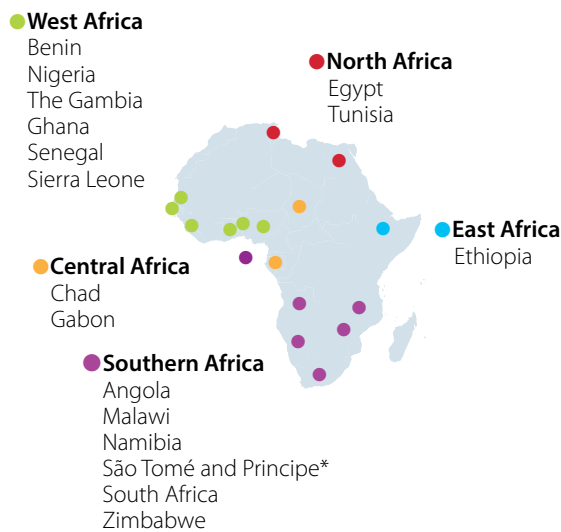
Part of the success is due to e-visas. 15 countries have added an e-visa since 2016; eight of those countries are among 2022's top 20 performers. Visas on arrival are also playing a role. Three countries—Burundi, Djibouti, and Ethiopia—undertook wholesale changes to their visa regime and moved from a general “visa required” policy to visas on arrival. All three had ranked among Africa's lowest performers in 2021, and moved into the top 20 in 2022.

Today, all of the AVOI's top 20 performers offer visa-free access or a visa on arrival to the nationals of some African countries, if not most or all of them. These countries have gradually moved away from requiring visitors of other African countries to obtain a visa before travelling.

Who climbed the most?

A few countries stand out as having significantly opened their visa regime between 2016 and 2022. Often, this caused them to climb significantly in the AVOI rankings. Overall, fewer countries now require visitors to obtain a visa and more countries have introduced visa-free entry (or expanded the number of countries to which they extend visa-free entry). In addition, more countries than before now offer a visa on arrival or an e-visa.

Which countries progressed the most in the last six years?



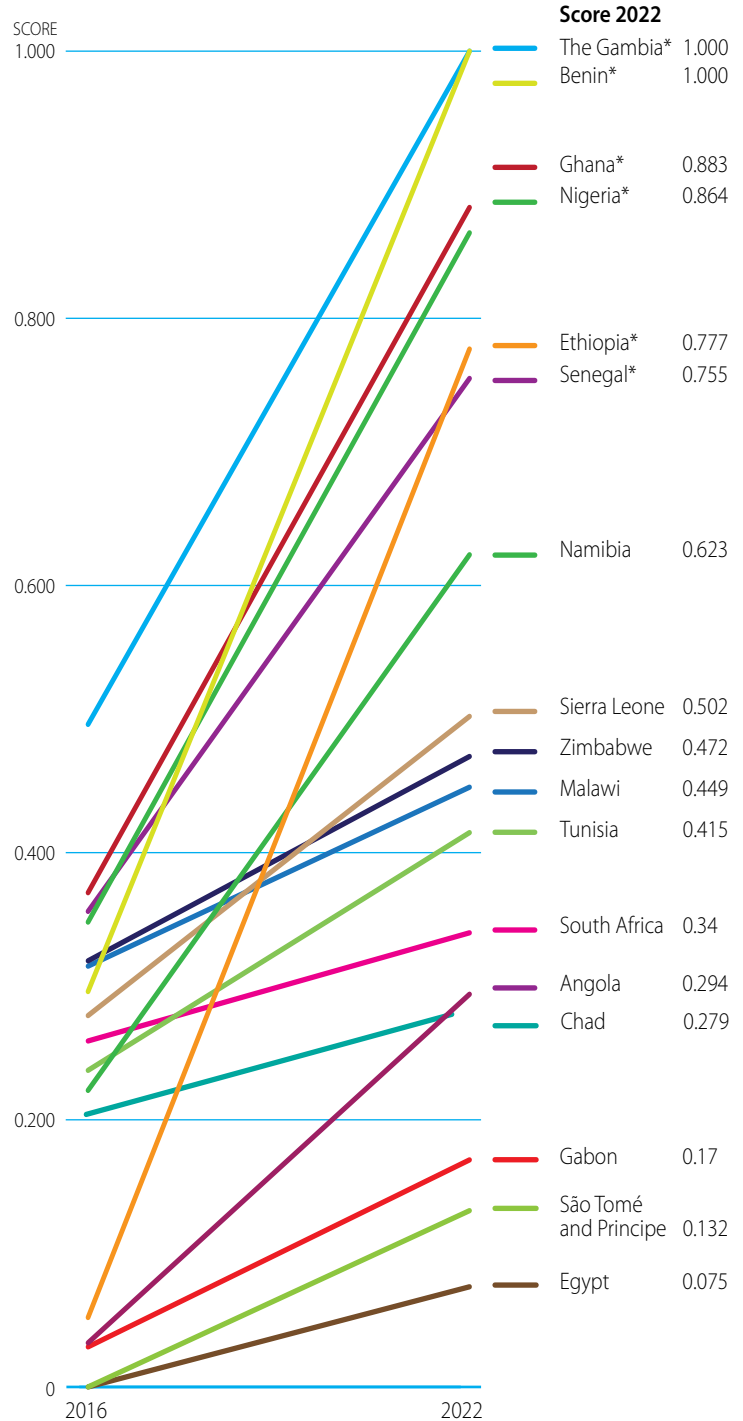
*The African Development Bank assigns São Tomé and Príncipe to the Southern African region.

The largest nominal increase in score since 2016 was achieved by Ethiopia (East Africa), which now figures among the continent's top 20 performers (17th). Ethiopia thus regained much of the AVOI ranking that it lost in 2021 under the pandemic. Benin made the second-largest strides, notwithstanding that it started from a higher base, and is now one of Africa's three best performers: it allows Africans from every country on the continent to enter visa-free. Only Seychelles and The Gambia do likewise.

The largest visa openness improvements over 2016–2022 were recorded by West African countries, four of which are among the continent's top five (Benin, Ghana, Nigeria, and The Gambia) and six of which are among the continent's top 10 (adding Senegal and Sierra Leone).

A sizeable number of Southern African countries have also improved significantly: Angola, Malawi, Namibia, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Zimbabwe. In North Africa, Tunisia is among the countries having most improved.

Most improved AVOI score, 2016–2022



*A top-20 performer on the 2022 AVOI

The African Union

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS ON THE AfCFTA

The African Continental Free Trade Area

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is the largest free trade agreement in the world. It counts more member countries, covers a larger geography, and applies to more people than any similar agreement.

The AfCFTA is the flagship project of the African Union (AU) and is the AU's blueprint for inclusive and sustainable development under Agenda 2063. Over the past year, another seven AU member states ratified the AfCFTA and deposited their instruments of ratification with the AU Secretariat, bringing the number of ratifications to 44.

*"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."*⁹

African Union Agenda 2063



Creating One African Market

The AfCFTA has its origins in an AU decision, adopted at a meeting of the AU Heads of State in 2012, to establish a continental free trade area that will culminate in a single continental market for goods and services in which businesspeople and investments may move freely across borders. The AfCFTA Agreement's ultimate objective is to eliminate 97% of tariffs on intra-Africa trade. The Agreement also addresses non-tariff barriers to trade and related concerns: the harmonization of standards, procedures that govern the movement of goods across borders, and administrative matters.

For preferential trade to happen under the AfCFTA, AU member states must agree on rules of origin and tariffs. These determine the market access conditions that allow traders throughout Africa to do business across borders on a preferential basis. Most of the negotiations on rules of origin and most offers of tariff liberalization under the AfCFTA occur between countries that do not already have a preferential trade agreement with one another. This is because several of Africa's regional economic communities have already implemented preferential trading regimes, which will continue to exist alongside the AfCFTA.

Negotiations on rules of origin and tariffs have progressed substantially since the AfCFTA was agreed, but the process, content, and dynamics of free trade agreements are complex and official trading under the AfCFTA's system, which had been scheduled for 1 January 2021, only recently began on a small number of products between a reduced group of countries. Nonetheless, significant additional progress took place over the past year and almost all outstanding rules of origin are now agreed (see the inset on page 23). Some of the remaining rules will be finalized imminently.

The AfCFTA Guided Trade Initiative

At the ninth meeting of the AfCFTA Council of Ministers in July 2022, the parties agreed to invite the 29 countries that had submitted their tariff schedules to begin trading under the AfCFTA. Their objective was to test the AfCFTA's operational, institutional, and legal arrangements and its trade policy environment, and to demonstrate that the AfCFTA is ready for business—that it allows for commercially meaningful trade. The start of trading was also expected to send a clear political message to countries that had not yet submitted their tariff offers, and to demonstrate to economic operators the AfCFTA's promise of real opportunities in Africa.

On 7 October 2022, the pilot phase of the Guided Trade Initiative launched with eight member states: Cameroon, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Tunisia. Eligible products include ceramic tiles, batteries, horticulture products, avocados, flowers, pharmaceuticals, palm oil, tea, rubber, and other products for which rules of origin and tariffs have been agreed.

*"The AfCFTA sends a strong signal to the international investor community that Africa is open for business, based on a single rule-book for trade and investment."*¹⁰

H.E. Wamkele Mene, Secretary General
African Continental Free Trade Area Secretariat

This is a significant development, and the first trade in goods under the AfCFTA has subsequently taken place, notably between countries that are not members of the same regional trading bloc and among whom trading preferences did not yet exist. Meanwhile, a special committee has been established to coordinate and operationalize trade transactions. Member states have also established their own ad hoc committees.

The AfCFTA e-Tariff Book

Transparency and access to information are key tenets of the AfCFTA. One of the AfCFTA's trade facilitation measures is a digital e-tariff platform¹¹ which supplies users with information relevant to trade, specifically on different countries' tariffs and the classification of commodities.

The AfCFTA Rules of Origin Manual

Only goods that originate in a AfCFTA member state qualify for preferential market access. The AfCFTA Secretariat has published a new manual that details the AfCFTA's rules, how preferential origin is determined, and administrative criteria. This manual will play an important role in helping businesses take advantage of opportunities under the AfCFTA. The manual forms an integral part of the Agreement's trade provisions.

How do these developments relate to the free movement of people?

Recent strides towards completing negotiations on the AfCFTA trade provisions have been notable, and include meaningful tools and emerging opportunities for traders. These developments help set the course for a more integrated continent where trade has a greater chance to flourish. But, in the absence of progress in a host of other disciplines, opportunities for trade will always be limited.

Access to the continent's markets also depends on conditions that govern the trade in services. Trading across borders requires communications, financial services, and transport, and many of these involve people moving across borders. So do tourism, higher education, medical care, professional services and many others.

Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons in Africa

In March 2018, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, a majority of African countries—30—signed the Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons. Another two countries signed later. The Protocol adopts a progressive approach that seeks to liberalize movement in three primary phases: the right of entry, the right of residence, and the right of establishment.

The free movement of Africans throughout Africa will do more than promote integration. It will facilitate intra-African trade and investment, create and promote employment opportunities, make labour more mobile, and raise living standards.

To date, however, only four countries have ratified the Protocol: Mali, Niger, Rwanda, and São Tomé and Príncipe. Some of the highest ranked countries on the AVOI are still to sign. The number of ratifications has remained unchanged over the past year and is below the threshold of 15 countries needed for the Protocol to enter into force.

Yet as this report chronicles, many African countries have made significant strides towards visa openness and have sometimes introduced innovative solutions to ease travel and access. Most countries have also fully signed and ratified the AfCFTA Agreement, and openly embrace regional and continental integration.

Independent of the Protocol, regional initiatives have advanced the movement of people as well. In some regional economic communities, for example, countries reciprocate visa-free access with the other members of their economic community—far more so than what their AVOI ranking for the continent would suggest. ECOWAS and EAC have regional movement protocols in place, and SADC has facilitated movement as well, albeit with more focus on sovereignty and bilateral agreements between countries. Regional advances like these can act as stepping stones to further adoption of the Protocol.

For free trade in Africa to become a reality, Africans need to be freer to move across the continent. Cross-border investment, the development of regional value chains, and broad-based economic integration all depend on it. Addressing legitimate concerns about the mechanics of the Protocol, clarifying the Protocol's roadmap for implementation, and helping countries exchange information more transparently would move the process forward.

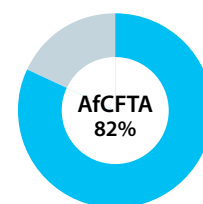
20 countries who most improved their scores, 2016–2022

Country	Score increase, 2016–2022 (no. of points)	Top 20, 2022	Visa Openness rank, 2016	Visa Openness rank, 2022	Offers e-visa	Ratified AfCFTA ¹²	Signed PFMP ¹³	Joined SAATM ¹⁴
Ethiopia	+0.726	●	46	17	●	●		●
Benin	+0.704	●	31	1	●			●
Nigeria	+0.516	●	25	6	●	●		●
Ghana	+0.513	●	22	4		●	●	●
Gambia, The	+0.504	●	18	1		●	●	●
Namibia	+0.400	●	38	21		●		●
Senegal	+0.399	●	24	18		●	●	●
Angola	+0.261		49	38		●	●	
Sierra Leone	+0.224	●	32	22	●	●	●	●
Tunisia	+0.178		36	27	●	●		
Zimbabwe	+0.153		27	23	●	●	●	●
Gabon	+0.140		50	42	●	●	●	●
Malawi	+0.134		28	25	●	●	●	
São Tomé and Príncipe	+0.132		52	44	●	●	●	
South Africa	+0.080		35	33		●		●
Chad	+0.076		40	39		●	●	●
Egypt	+0.075		52	49	●	●		●
Tanzania	+0.050	●	17	20	●	●	●	
Rwanda	+0.046	●	9	5	●	●	●	●
Cameroon	+0.039		44	44	●	●		●

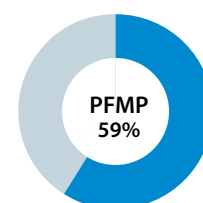
AfCFTA=African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement; PFMP=Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons; SAATM=Single African Air Transport Market

African Union initiatives, 2022

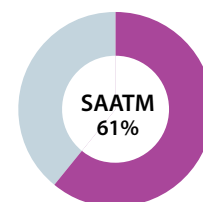
Of 54 African countries:



44 countries (82%) have ratified the AfCFTA Agreement¹²



32 countries (59%) have signed the Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons¹³



35 countries (61%) have joined the Single African Air Transport Market¹⁴

African value chains and the AfCFTA

One of the AfCFTA's ambitions is to create new continental markets for African-produced goods. Many African countries principally produce untransformed, resource-based goods. On their own, these countries do not necessarily have the capacity to transition to more complex production and manufacturing. The AfCFTA can help by creating an environment that encourages the development of regional value chains. Regional value chains spread the production of goods across different countries within a broad geographic area, with businesses at different locations specializing in different parts of the production process.

Tariffs, rules of origin, and free movement

Regional value chains need certain conditions to succeed. Three of the most essential concern tariffs, rules of origin, and the movement of people.

- Tariffs, especially high tariffs, within a region constrain regional trade and raise the cost of producing goods that use inputs sourced from elsewhere in the region.
- Rules-of-origin regimes diverge among African countries and regions. Harmonizing them would simplify trade and spur the formation of regional value chains (see the sidebar).
- Businesspeople, traders, service providers, investors, and specialists of all kinds must be able to move freely.

What role do services play?

Services account for over half of Africa's GDP and are key to fostering the development of regional value chains. The AfCFTA prioritizes several important service sectors for liberalization, notably communications, business services, transportation, financial services, and tourism.

Trade in services cannot develop in a meaningful way unless people are free to move across borders. Truck drivers transport goods from one region to the next. Engineers work on infrastructure projects in countries where critical skills are in shortage. International specialists are seconded to local institutions, and professors teach at foreign universities.

Rules of origin under the AfCFTA

Rules of origin are criteria that specify how much local working or processing is required on materials and intermediate goods sourced from abroad for a product to obtain "local origin" status and access markets on preferential terms. Negotiating rules of origin is complex and time-consuming, not least because the rules often greatly affect countries' trade and industrial activity. The rules may also stimulate or stifle regional value chains, depending on how they are designed.

A delicate balance

Rules of origin that require a large share of originating content (content that originates within the region) may encourage regional production and sourcing, but could curb trade if the region does not produce enough competitively priced inputs with the features required. Rules of origin that allow a large share of non-originating content may encourage trade, but could discourage local and regional production and the formation of regional value chains for "made in Africa" products.

A progressive approach

The AfCFTA negotiations recognize this dilemma by proposing transitional rules in certain sectors. In these sectors, the rules of origin allow a larger share of non-originating content at first. After three or five years, the rules become more restrictive, requiring products to use entirely African-made content to qualify for "local origin" status under the AfCFTA.

In the short-to-medium term, the AfCFTA will not harmonize rules of origin across the continent but will apply rules that encourage trade between countries not already trading on a preferential basis within a regional economic community. Similarly, tariff offers under the AfCFTA are being exchanged between countries and blocs that do not already offer each other preferential tariffs. In some sectors, the AfCFTA's rules require more originating content than the rules agreed within the regional economic communities.

Where are we now?

AfCFTA signatories have largely agreed on the AfCFTA's rules of origin: only a few rules on certain products and sectors are still being negotiated. One of these sectors is the automotive sector, where the rules will weigh heavily on whether preferential trade and investment are likely to flourish. Another sector is textiles and clothing, which is of keen interest to many African countries in terms of industrializing and creating formal employment.

While the AfCFTA's Protocol on Trade in Goods is being finalised, the AfCFTA's recent Guided Trade Initiative is allowing a selection of products to be traded under AfCFTA rules between a small number of countries that have already agreed on tariffs and rules of origin between each other. Meanwhile, regional economic communities continue to play an important role in regulating—and liberalizing—trade.

Regional economic communities

A CLOSER LOOK AT VISA OPENNESS

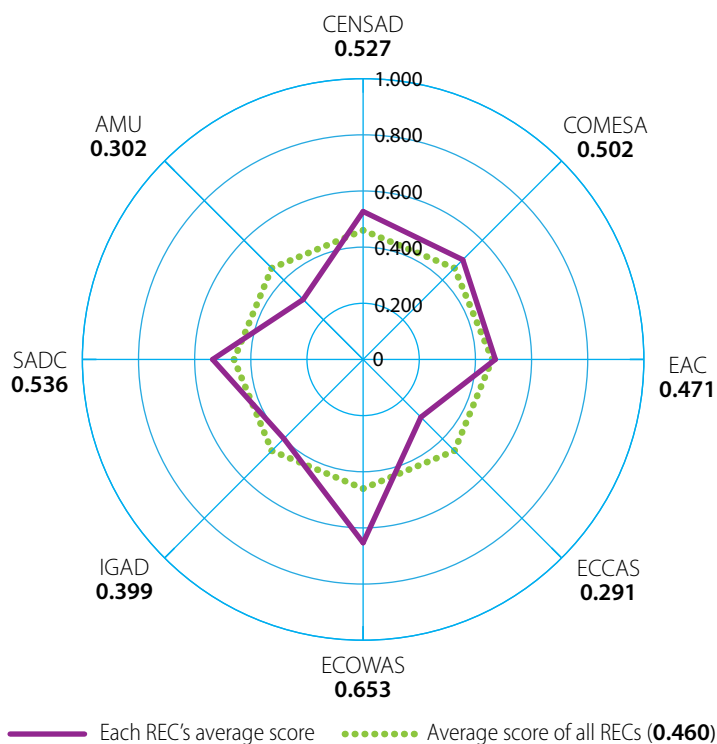
The African Union recognizes eight regional economic communities (RECs) in Africa. These communities pursue regional integration as a means of expanding markets and cross-border trade, freeing the movement of people, and better cooperating on infrastructure development, customs and border management, responses to natural disasters and health emergencies, political matters, and more. By mitigating risks and fostering sociocultural cohesion, regional integration makes regions more stable, more peaceful, and more secure.

*"If you look at some of the regions that have some of the highest inter-regional trade, these are the regions that have inter-regional mobility."*¹⁵

Maureen Achieng, Chief of Mission and International Organization for Migration Representative to the AU, UNECA and the IGAD in Ethiopia

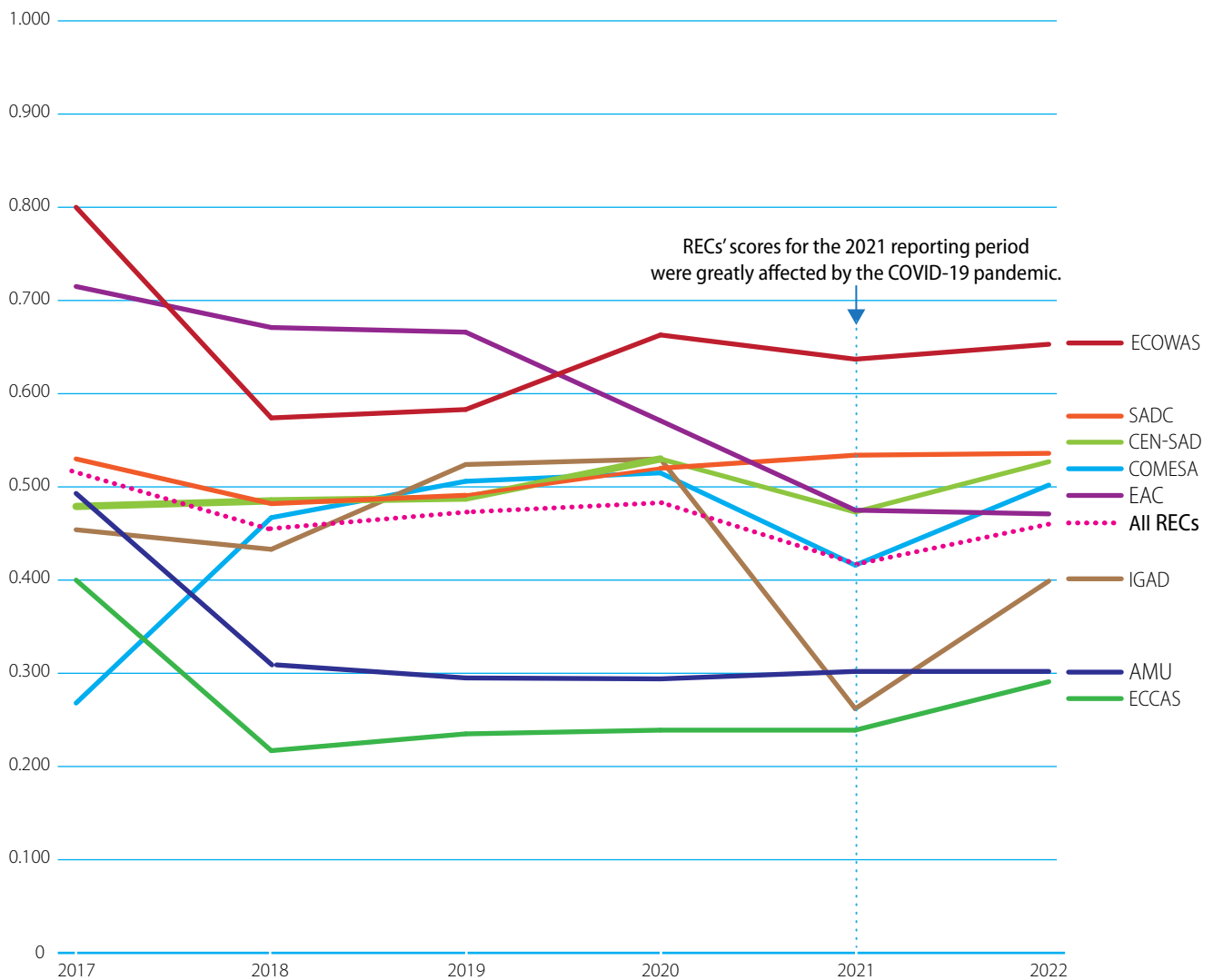
A striking discovery about Africa's regional economic communities this year is how most rebounded from the pandemic, often fully reversing recent restrictions that impacted their visa openness. However, recent changes in scores cannot always be attributed solely to the pandemic.

Average REC scores, 2022



- The EAC, for example, had one of the highest aggregate visa openness scores in 2017, but its score declined sharply over 2019–2021 principally because of changes in the member state configuration, and recent changes to individual members' scores largely cancelling each other out (RECs' averages are often significantly impacted by a change in visa policy by just one or two countries, or by a new country joining the REC).
- IGAD's score also declined sharply between 2019 and 2021, but rose significantly in 2022 after IGAD member states made progress on adopting regional migration policies (IGAD members are presently finalizing protocols on the free movement of persons).
- COMESA recovered and has in fact surpassed its pre-pandemic level.
- Visa openness in the SADC appeared largely unaffected by the pandemic and has retained its slight upward trajectory since 2018.
- CEN-SAD also improved its visa openness score to slightly above pre-pandemic levels. This progress appears to be driven in part by its members' overlap with ECOWAS and the latter's significant progress in liberalizing cross-border movement of persons.

Average REC scores, 2016–2022



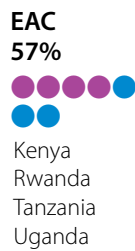
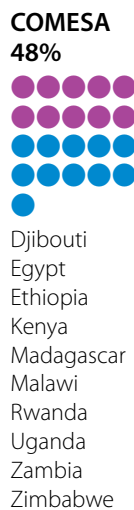
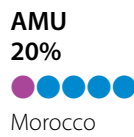
- ECOWAS is the REC with the highest average visa openness score on the continent, continuing its upward trajectory. It is also the REC with by far the highest level of intra-regional visa openness, with 97% of travel by the nationals of ECOWAS member states taking place visa-free on a reciprocal basis. This far exceeds any other REC's level of visa-free travel for the nationals of that community. ECOWAS made early progress in this regard: it adopted its Protocol Relating to Free Movement of Persons, Residence and Establishment in 1979.
- AMU currently ranks second-lowest, slightly ahead of ECCAS. AMU's visa openness score has remained largely unchanged in recent years.
- Although ECCAS ranks lowest among the RECs, it has been on a gradual upward trajectory since 2018.

On average, visa openness in Africa's RECs rose significantly between 2021 and 2022, with six of eight RECs improving their average score. This reflects the findings of the 2022 AVOI: ten countries improved their score between 2021 and 2022, 40 maintained their score, and only four countries saw their score decline. Furthermore, in several countries, the pandemic catalyzed long-awaited progress on the freedom of movement: some countries streamlined the visa process, for example, while others moved towards the e-visa.

In summary, the average score of all regions combined is lower in 2022 than in pre-pandemic 2019 or in 2020, the year that COVID-19 reached Africa. But five of the eight regions still scored higher in 2022 than in 2019. Given the headwinds caused by the pandemic, this is a notable achievement.

E-visas in Africa's RECs, 2022

- REC member states that offer an e-visa
- REC member states that do not offer an e-visa



Visa openness in Africa's regional economic communities: How does each community fare?

Visa openness is an important component of regional economic communities' goals for regional integration. Many of the objectives and benefits of regional integration can only come to fruition when people can move across borders smoothly and inexpensively. The movement of persons links closely not only to social integration but is essential for the provision of cross-border services and for the regional trade in goods, all of which are important components of regional economic integration and for raising the income of Africa's citizens.

The next pages of this report discuss the AVOI scores of the regional economic communities, calculated on the basis of member states' individual scores, and analyze visa openness region by region. The findings reveal the extent to which each regional community, seen comparatively, encourages the free movement of people. The results are contextualized in light of countries' individual rankings on the all-Africa index.

An interesting aspect of visa openness within regional economic communities is regional reciprocity. Reciprocity is a measure of the visa regimes in place between the member states of a given regional economic community. It refers to the visa openness of every member state in relation to every other member state within the same community.

Some regional economic communities reciprocate more visa-openness than others: that is, they extend more favourable terms of travel to each other than to non-member countries—for example allowing each other's citizens to travel to their territory visa-free, or allowing them to obtain a visa on arrival instead of requiring them to secure a visa before departure. In other regional economic communities, however, there are no or fewer regional reciprocal measures in place. This sometimes causes member states to rank much higher on the AVOI (the continental scale) than their regional reciprocity scores would suggest. This may indicate that countries are more welcoming to citizens of countries outside their regional bloc than to countries within it.

*"Free movement of persons is a key pillar of regional trade and economic integration, as it facilitates trade in goods and services and industrialisation, thereby contributing to socio-economic development and poverty reduction. Traders and service providers can deliver products on site and customers can visit suppliers abroad."*¹⁶

Assessing regional integration in Africa V

United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (2012)



Arab Maghreb Union (AMU)

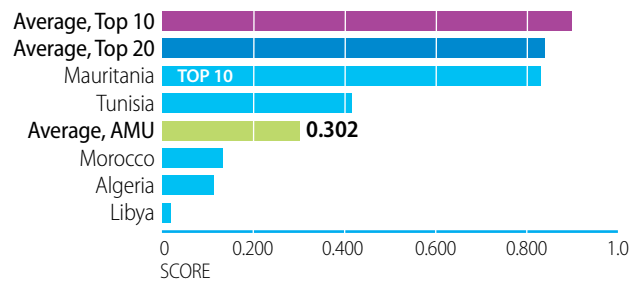
Algeria
Libya
Mauritania
Morocco
Tunisia

Population
102.9 million¹⁷
GDP
USD 382.8 billion¹⁷

Visa openness

The Arab Maghreb Union comprises five North African countries. Their average AVOI score is lower than that of the members of any other regional economic community except ECCAS. AMU includes Mauritania, which ranks among the continent's top 10.

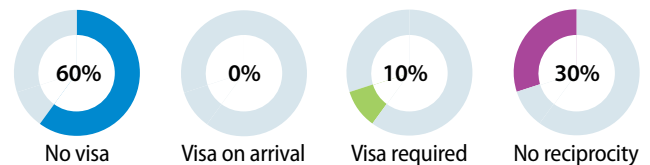
Visa openness scores, AMU, 2022



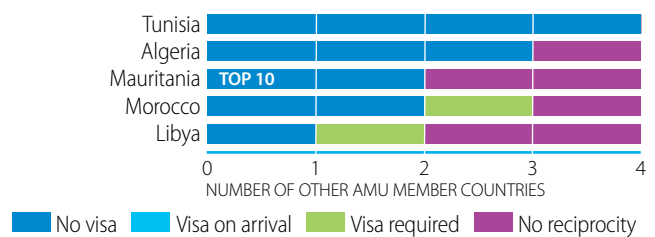
Regional reciprocity

The visa regime of several AMU member states is much more open to countries within AMU than to countries elsewhere on the continent. Tunisia ranks highest in this regard, offering visa-free travel to the nationals of all other AMU member states. Algeria follows closely behind, offering visa-free access to three of its four fellow AMU member states. Overall, visa-free travel is possible, on a reciprocal basis, in 60% of other countries within the AMU.

Average reciprocity within AMU, % of member countries



Reciprocity within AMU, number of member countries





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

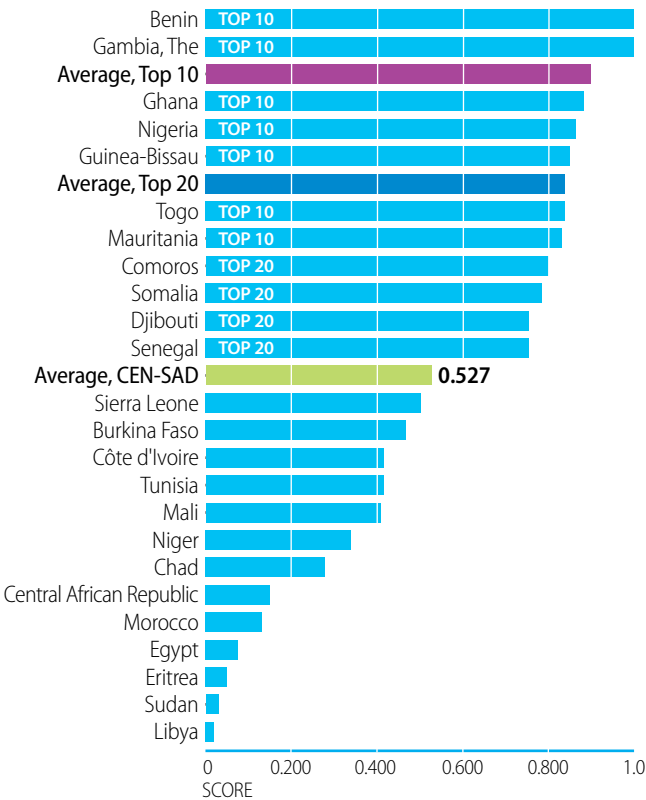
Benin	Gambia, The	Sierra Leone
Burkina Faso	Ghana	Somalia
Central African Republic	Guinea-Bissau	Sudan
Chad	Libya	Togo
Comoros	Mali	Tunisia
Cote d'Ivoire	Mauritania	Population
Djibouti	Morocco	553 million ¹⁸ (2014)
Egypt	Niger	GDP
Eritrea	Nigeria	USD 1 350.7 billion ¹⁸ (2014)
	Senegal	

Visa openness

The Community of Sahel-Saharan States was established in 1998. One of its objectives is the free movement of persons. Of the eight regional economic communities recognized by the African Union, CEN-SAD ranks third on the AVOI, behind ECOWAS and SADC.

Many highly-ranked countries are members of CEN-SAD: it is home to 7 of 10 of the AVOI's highest performers, including Benin and The Gambia, which with Seychelles are the continent's best performers. Another 4 CEN-SAD countries are among Africa's top 20 performers.

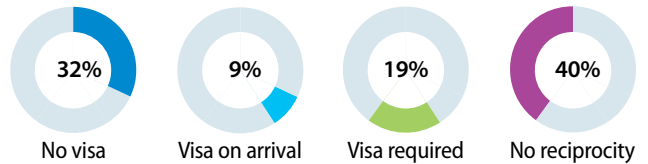
Visa openness scores, CEN-SAD, 2022



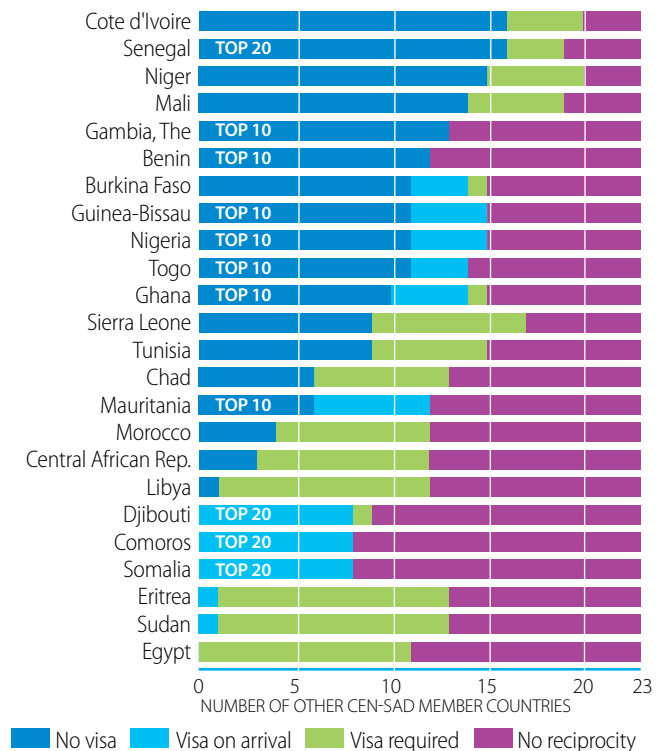
Regional reciprocity

CEN-SAD's high rankings on the AVOI do not translate into high reciprocity on visa openness within CEN-SAD. In over two-thirds of cases, CEN-SAD countries prohibit each other's nationals from entering their territory without a visa. Furthermore, several of the continent's leading countries (countries that figure among Africa's top 10 performers) are less liberal to their fellow CEN-SAD members than they are to countries outside the CEN-SAD bloc. These countries offer visa-free travel to less than half of their fellow CEN-SAD members.

Average reciprocity within CEN-SAD, % of member countries



Reciprocity within CEN-SAD, number of member countries



Côte d'Ivoire is CEN-SAD'S best performer on regional reciprocity, offering visa-free access to 16 of the remaining 23 CEN-SAD members, despite ranking only 27th out of 53 countries continent-wide. In contrast, while some CEN-SAD members rank among Africa's top 20 performers, this is not always reflected at the regional level.



Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)

Burundi	Libya	Tunisia
Comoros	Madagascar	Uganda
Djibouti	Malawi	Zambia
Democratic Republic of Congo	Mauritius	Zimbabwe
Egypt	Rwanda	Population
Eritrea	Seychelles	560 million ¹⁹
Ethiopia	Somalia	GDP
Kenya	Sudan	USD 768 billion ¹⁹
	Eswatini	

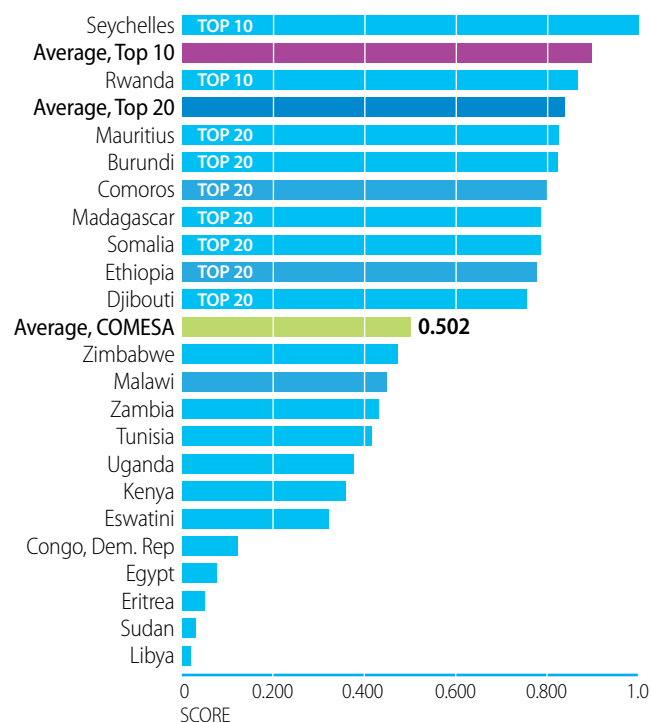
Visa openness

Visa openness within COMESA varies widely. Seychelles, one of Africa’s three top-ranked countries, offers visa-free entry to the entire African continent. Libya, in contrast, is the continent’s joint least open country on the AVOI, while the DRC, Egypt, Eritrea, and Sudan are also ranked low. Ethiopia notably improved its score almost 20-fold between 2021 and 2022, climbing from 48th to 17th place. Djibouti rose from 52nd to 18th over the same period.

Overall, COMESA ranks fourth of the eight regional economic communities: it is home to two of the AVOI’s top 10 performers, and another seven rank inside the top 20.

COMESA adopted a visa protocol in 1984 that sought to eventually eliminate visas on intra-regional travel, followed in 2001 by a regional protocol on the free movement of persons and right of establishment and residence.

Visa openness scores, COMESA, 2022

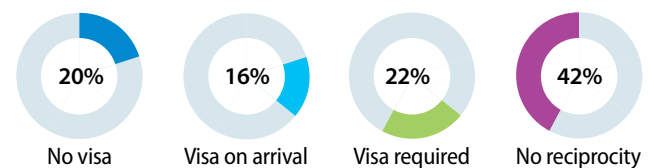


Only 4 countries have to date signed the protocol and implemented its fundamental principles; however, a task force was recently established to help speed up implementation of the two legal instruments.²⁰

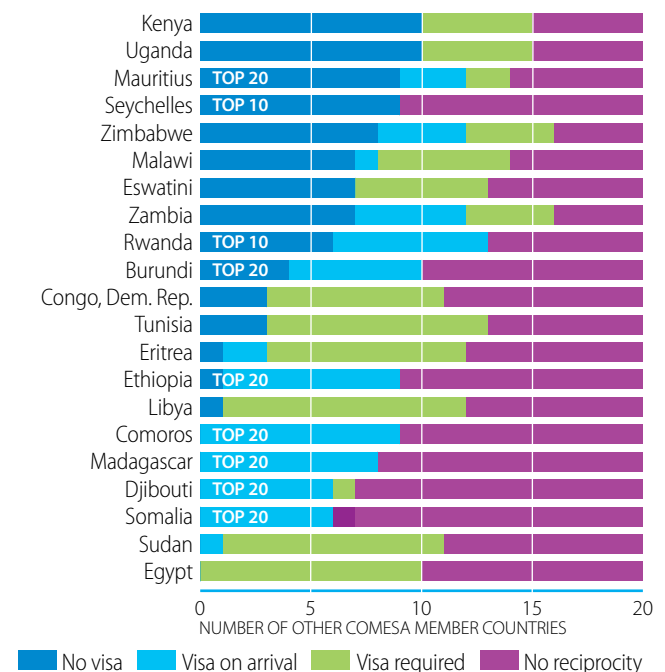
Regional reciprocity

Visa-free reciprocity within COMESA averages a low 20%, or 36% when combined with a visa on arrival. No COMESA member state offers visa-free entry to more than half of other COMESA members: the most open countries in this regard are Kenya and Uganda, which dispense ten fellow COMESA members from obtaining a visa but do not offer a visa on arrival to the rest. Mauritius (top-20 ranked), Rwanda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe (all three top-10 ranked) offer simplified entry to more than half of their fellow COMESA members. Egypt ranks last on regional reciprocity, only offering visa-free access or a visa on arrival to five African countries, none of which is a member of COMESA.

Average reciprocity within COMESA, % member countries



Reciprocity within COMESA, number of member countries





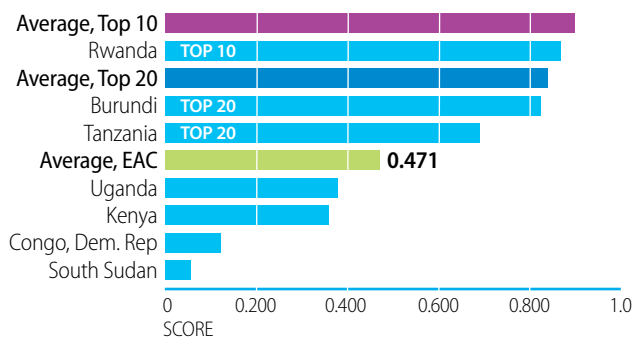
East African Community (EAC)

Burundi	Democratic Republic of Congo	Population 283.7 million ²¹
Kenya	South Sudan	GDP USD 305.3 billion ²¹
Rwanda	Uganda	
Tanzania		

Visa openness

Of the eight regional economic communities recognized by the African Union, the average AVOI score of the members of the East African Community is fifth highest. Counting only seven member states, the EAC is home to high-ranking countries—Rwanda (top 10), Burundi (top 20), and Tanzania (top 20).

Visa openness scores, EAC, 2022



*"I'd like to think of the Free Movement Protocol, the joint Labour Migration Program, the Single African Air Transport Market, and the AfCFTA, as being four wheels of a vehicle. If one of those wheels does not move right, the vehicle will possibly grind to a halt..."*²²

Maureen Achieng, Chief of Mission and International Organization for Migration Representative to the AU, UNECA, and the IGAD in Ethiopia

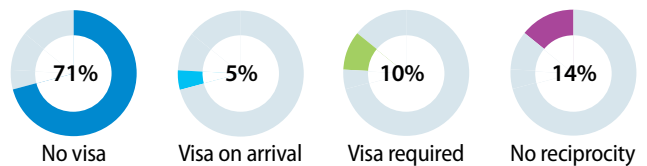
*"The movement of persons is essential to regional integration, to cross-border business linkages, to the cross-border supply or consumption of specific services, and to sectors such as tourism."*²³

Trudi Hartzenberg, Executive Director
Trade Law Centre (tralac)

Regional reciprocity

As a customs union, the EAC has significantly reduced intra-regional barriers to trade. This is reflected in its relatively high score on regional reciprocity: 71% for visa-free access and an additional 5% for visas on arrival, for a combined score of 76%. Six of the EAC's seven members require a visa from only one other member.

Average reciprocity within EAC, % of member countries



Reciprocity within EAC, number of member countries



On the whole, visa openness within the EAC and on a reciprocal basis is significantly higher than the visa openness of EAC member states vis-à-vis the continent.

*"I'm going back to Goma via Uganda and I'm sure this is the last time I'll pay for a visa."*²⁴

Rita Muhindo, Congolese cross-border trader in Kenya



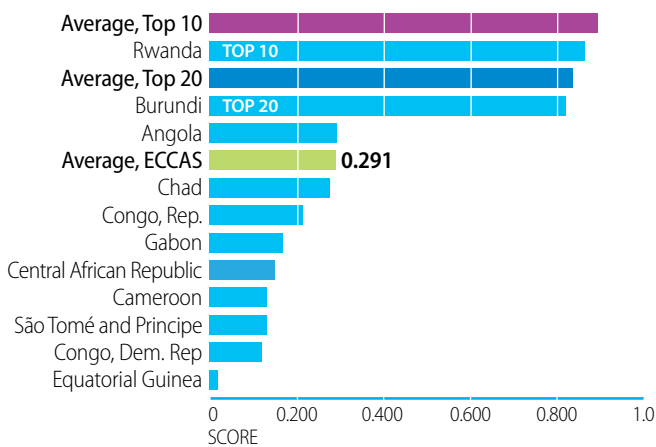
Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)

Angola	Democratic Republic of Congo	Population 158.3 million ²⁵ (2014)
Burundi	Equatorial Guinea	GDP USD 257.8 billion ²⁵ (2014)
Cameroon	Gabon	
Central African Republic	Rwanda	
Chad	São Tomé and Príncipe	
Republic of the Congo		

Visa openness

Collectively, the members of the Economic Community of Central African States rank lower on the AVOI than the members of any other regional economic community in Africa. ECCAS is home to two high-ranking countries—Rwanda (top 10) and Burundi (top 20)—but also a large number of the continent's least open countries, whose visa openness in some cases tends to be more confined towards other countries within the region.

Visa openness scores, ECCAS, 2022



"Because of the proximity of countries in regional groupings and their greater familiarity with each other, I think it likely that free movement will advance first among groupings within regional communities."²⁶

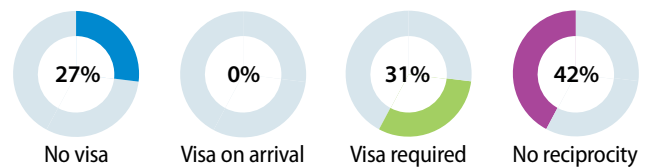
Alan Hirsch, Emeritus Professor of Development Policy and Practice at the Nelson Mandela School of Public Governance, University of Capetown

Regional reciprocity

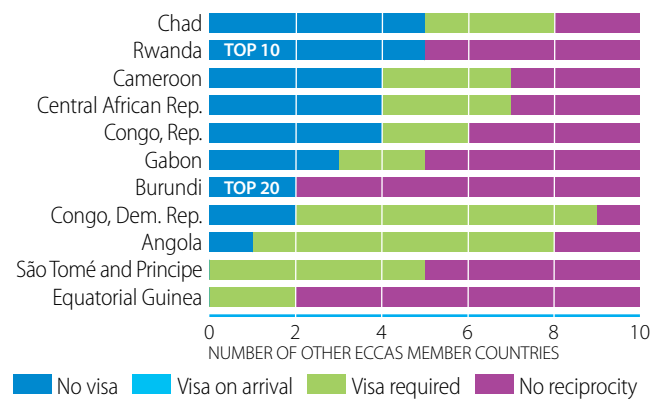
Regional visa-free reciprocity among ECCAS members sees 9 of 11 member states offering visa-free entry to at least one other member state; however, no visa-on-arrival options are offered on a reciprocal basis, meaning that where a visa on arrival is offered (primarily by Burundi), it is not reciprocated.

In terms of reciprocity writ large, Burundi and Equatorial Guinea score lowest: Burundi offers a visa-free or visa-on-arrival option to all other ECCAS members, mostly on a non-reciprocal basis, whereas Equatorial Guinea requires a visa from every other ECCAS member state, even though its nationals enjoy visa-free access to six ECCAS members and may obtain a visa on arrival when travelling to two others.

Average reciprocity within ECCAS, % of member countries



Reciprocity within ECCAS, number of member countries





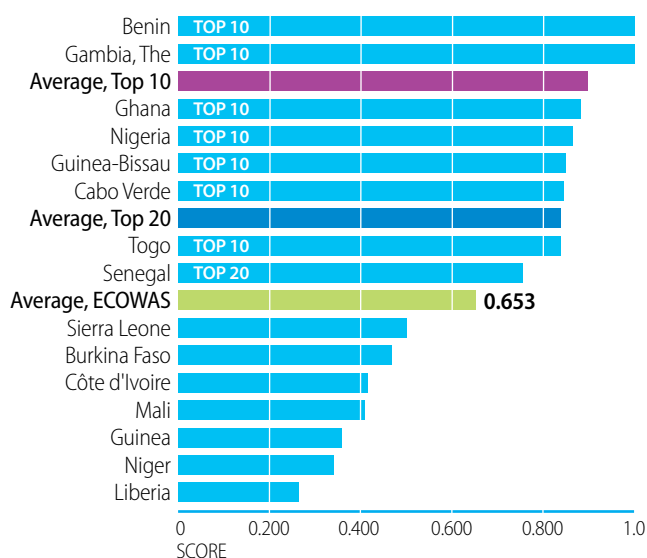
Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

Benin	Guinea	Sierra Leone
Burkina Faso	Guinea-Bissau	Togo
Cabo Verde	Liberia	Population
Côte d'Ivoire	Mali	407.7 million ²⁷
Gambia, The	Niger	GDP
Ghana	Nigeria	USD 17.79 billion ²⁷
	Senegal	

Visa openness

ECOWAS's stance on visa openness dates to 1979, when the region adopted a protocol on the movement of people and the right to residence. Phase 1 of the protocol related to the right of entry and is the only phase to have been implemented so far. The results are impressive: today, the average AVOI score of ECOWAS's 15 members is higher than the average score of the members of any other regional economic community in Africa. ECOWAS also counts more top-10 performers (seven) than any other regional economic community. Along with Seychelles, which is not a member of ECOWAS, ECOWAS members Benin and The Gambia are jointly ranked the most visa-open countries on the continent. Guinea has improved remarkably over the last year, rising from 52nd position to 31st.

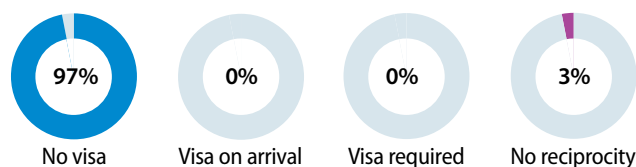
Visa openness scores, ECOWAS, 2022



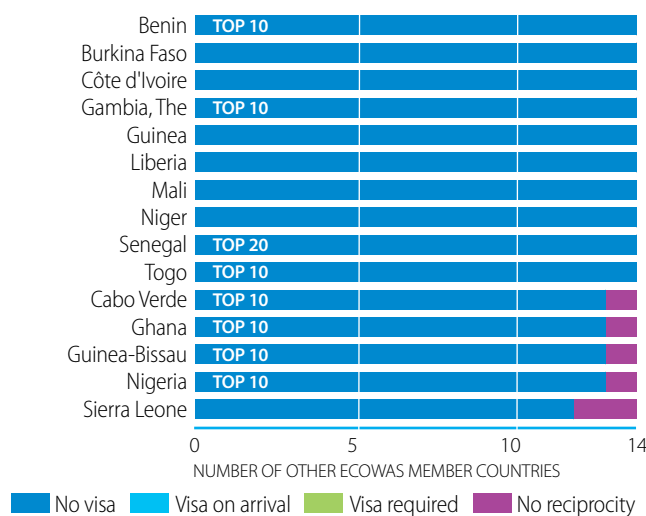
Regional reciprocity

Regional reciprocity within ECOWAS achieves a near perfect score: the nationals of 97% of ECOWAS member states do not require a visa to travel within the ECOWAS region. The nationals of 10 of ECOWAS's 15 members do not require a visa to visit the territory of any other member, and even the lowest-ranked country on the reciprocity index (Sierra Leone) reciprocates visa-free entry with 12 of ECOWAS's 14 other members. To the remaining two members, Sierra Leone offers a visa on arrival. No ECOWAS member state requires a visa in advance from the nationals of any other member.

Average reciprocity within ECOWAS, % of member countries



Reciprocity within ECOWAS, number of member countries



The region is also making strides on increasing its openness to non-ECOWAS countries: ECOWAS officials have agreed on a harmonized ECOWAS visa regime²⁸ (ECOVISA) that will standardize travel modalities to the region and within it.



Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD)

Djibouti	Somalia	Population
Eritrea	South Sudan	230 million ²⁹
Ethiopia	Sudan	GDP
Kenya	Uganda	USD 337.8 billion ³⁰

Visa openness

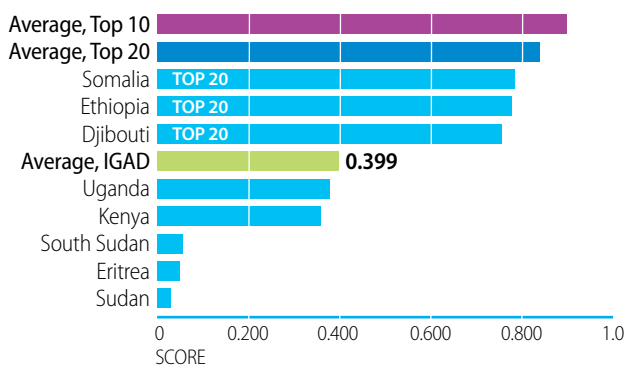
The Inter-Governmental Authority on Development comprises eight East African countries. Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Somalia rank among the continent’s top 20 performers, while Eritrea, South Sudan, and Sudan are among the AVOI’s poorest performers. IGAD members’ average AVOI score is sixth highest among the scores of the members of Africa’s eight regional economic communities.

*"For sure when you have this kind of integration you will have more development, more decent life, more job opportunities, this will be the benefit for us right now but it will be the benefit of our next generations."*³¹

Asrar Ahmed Elsidig
Sudan Ministry of Foreign Affairs

In 2020, IGAD endorsed its Protocol on Free Movement of Persons in the IGAD Region and formed a technical working group to harmonize visa regimes in the region.³²

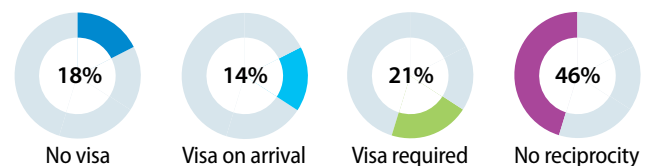
Visa openness scores, IGAD, 2022



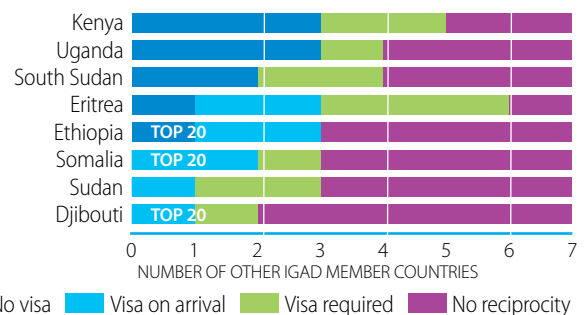
Regional reciprocity

On the whole, the members of IGAD offer little visa openness to each other on a reciprocal basis: their average reciprocity score is only 18%. This belies the fact that some IGAD members rank highly on visa openness when compared to all of the countries on the continent. For example, Somalia has the highest AVOI ranking of all IGAD members, yet reciprocates visa-free entry with none of its fellow IGAD members. In contrast, Kenya ranks highest among IGAD members for reciprocal visa-free access, but its ranking on the continental scale (the AVOI) falls below IGAD’s average. Kenya also ranks highest on visa-free reciprocity in COMESA and EAC.

Average reciprocity within IGAD, % of member countries



Reciprocity within IGAD, number of member countries



*"The debate on the benefits of trade has dominated this decade, and Africa has cast its vote for more and better trade with itself."*³³

Dr. Vera Songwe, Former Executive Secretary
United Nations Economic Commission for Africa



Southern African Development Community (SADC)

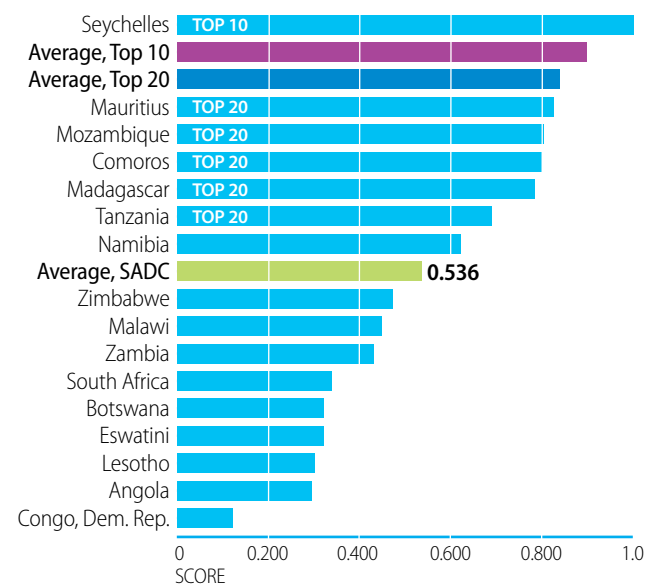
Angola	Malawi	Tanzania
Botswana	Mauritius	Zambia
Comoros	Mozambique	Zimbabwe
Democratic Republic of Congo	Namibia	Population
Lesotho	Seychelles	345 million ³⁴ (2018)
Madagascar	South Africa	GDP
	Eswatini	USD 721.3 m ³⁴ (2018)

Visa openness

With an average AVOI score of 0.536, the 16 members of the Southern African Development Community score higher as a group in 2022 than do the members of six of Africa’s seven other regional economic communities (SADC comes second only to ECOWAS). Among SADC members is Seychelles, which shares top place with Benin and The Gambia (ECOWAS). Seychelles is, however, somewhat of an outlier in the SADC: the AVOI scores of more than half of SADC’s members fall below the mean score for SADC overall. In total, six SADC countries feature among Africa’s top 20 performers.

Only half of SADC member states have signed the African Union’s Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons (most island states have not signed; neither have most members of the Southern African Customs Union). Most SADC members have signed SADC’s own Protocol on Facilitation of Movement of Persons³⁵ (2005), but only six countries—Mozambique and the five members of the Southern African Customs Union—have ratified it.

Visa openness scores, SADC, 2022



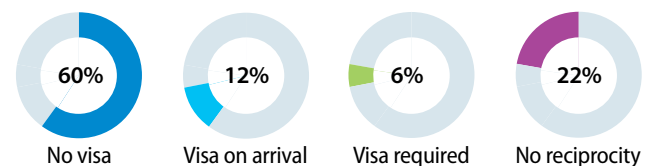
The SADC Protocol on Trade in Services entered into force on 13 January 2022: for it to most stimulate trade in the region, the movement of people in Southern Africa must be liberalized.

Regional reciprocity

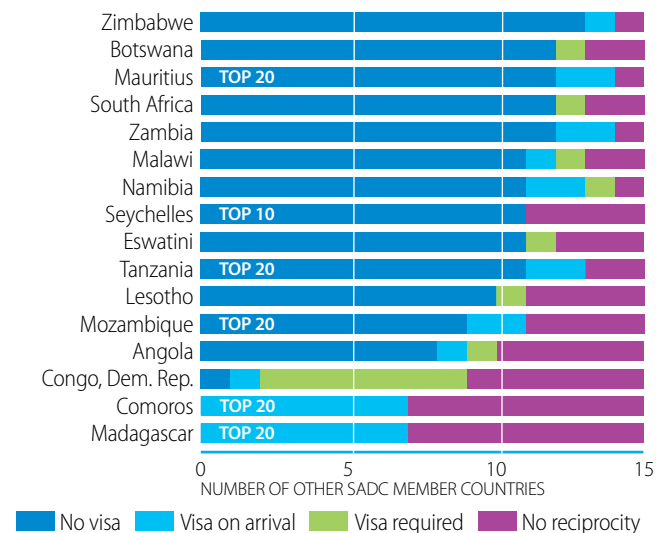
Regional reciprocity within SADC is relatively high: in 60% of cases, the nationals of SADC member states can travel visa-free to another SADC member state. In another 12% of cases, nationals may obtain a visa on arrival.

Zimbabwe allows the nationals of 13 of 15 other SADC countries to enter without a visa, and in September 2022, Namibia and Botswana called for fast-tracking the use of identification documents instead of passports to ease travel between the two countries. At the other end of the scale, Comoros and Madagascar are the least open: neither offers visa-free access to the nationals of any other SADC member state. Interestingly, however, both Comoros and Madagascar feature among the continent’s top 20 performers, owing to their offering a visa on arrival to the nationals of almost all other African countries. In this way, they differ from many other SADC members, which are much more open to countries within the SADC region than they are to African countries in general.

Average reciprocity within SADC, % of member countries



Reciprocity within SADC, number of member countries



Case Studies

COUNTRIES THAT MOVED UP IN 2022

Ethiopia

Ethiopia has made major strides in visa openness since the 2016 edition of the AVOI. The country's first progression up the ranks occurred over 2018–2019, when it adopted a much more liberal visa-on-arrival policy for continental visitors. By then, Ethiopia was also offering e-visas to visitors who intended to enter through the capital city's airport, Bole International.



These developments have eased Africans' travel to Ethiopia, a country that has become an increasingly important export-oriented hub for the agro-processing of horticultural products and the manufacturing of leather goods and clothing. Ethiopia is also fast expanding its tourism sector. Ethiopia's national airline is considered one of Africa's most successful carriers, and Addis Ababa, the country's capital, is quickly emerging as one of the most important transit hubs for intra-Africa and inter-continental travel. Addis Ababa also hosts the African Union's headquarters.

The COVID-19 pandemic, however, cut progress short. During 2021, Ethiopia temporarily stopped issuing visas on arrival, instead requiring visitors to obtain a visa in their home country, prior to travel.

The country later reversed this policy, and once again offers a visa on arrival to the nationals of almost all African countries. The citizens of Kenya and Djibouti may travel visa-free.

In terms of regional integration, Ethiopia is a member of COMESA and IGAD, and scores higher on visa openness than the average in either regional economic community. In October 2022, immigration sources reported that Ethiopia had suspended visas on arrival for a large number of countries,³⁶ instead requiring visitors to obtain a visa prior to departure. This gives prospective visitors the convenience of applying for a visa online before travelling.

Ethiopia, scores and ranking, 2016–2022

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Score	0.052	0.052	0.053	0.777	0.808	0.038	0.777
Rank	46	50	50	18	16	48	17

AVOI ranking: Ethiopia rejoined the 20 top-ranked countries in 2022, advancing 31 places over 2021.

2022 visa openness rate: The nationals of 96% of African countries are eligible to enter Ethiopia visa-free or with a visa on arrival (this changed in late-2022, when Ethiopia temporarily revoked visa-on-arrival privileges for many countries).

"As more economies are participating in research, development and innovation, the scale and complexity of international mobility of highly skilled workers keeps growing. Mobile talent spreads knowledge across borders both directly and indirectly."³⁷

Wilys Mac'Olae, Senior Manager
Fragomen, Kenya

Djibouti

Situated in the horn of Africa and bordering Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia, Djibouti plays an important role within the region, not least because of its access to the sea: access for itself and access for landlocked countries nearby. Most of Ethiopia’s maritime trade, for example, transits through Djibouti’s seaport. Djibouti City, the country’s capital, hosts the regional headquarters of IGAD, one of eight regional economic communities recognized by the African Union.



Djibouti’s rise back up the ranks of the 2022 AVOI follows its reversal of travel measures implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic, including restrictions on visas on arrival. During the pandemic, Djibouti required all visitors to obtain a visa prior to travel. Reversing this policy, along with Djibouti’s general openness towards incoming travel, has eased travellers’ ability to enter the country. Once again, citizens of most African countries are able to obtain a visa on arrival. They also have the option of applying for an e-visa ahead of travel.

Except for 2021, Djibouti has been one of Africa’s most visa-open countries, consistently figuring among the continent’s best 20 performers.

Although Djibouti scores well above the average for IGAD member states, its regional reciprocity score is relatively low, because most IGAD member states do not reciprocate Djibouti’s own visa-open stance—that is, they do not offer Djiboutians a visa on arrival or an e-visa on a reciprocal basis, even though Djibouti offers those options to them.

Djibouti, scores and ranking, 2016–2022							
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Score	0.785	0.800	0.800	0.785	0.785	0.000	0.755
Rank	15	10	14	17	19	52	18

AVOI ranking: Djibouti ranked 18th on the 2022 AVOI, significantly improving its ranking after reversing strict visa requirements implemented during the previous reporting period.

2022 visa openness rate: The nationals of 93% of African countries are eligible to enter Djibouti with a visa on arrival. Djibouti also offers travellers an e-visa service.

Burundi

Burundi climbed 32 places on the 2022 AVOI, ranking 12th and becoming one of the most open countries in East Africa. This is because Burundi now permits visitors from most African countries to obtain a visa on arrival, instead of having to secure a visa before leaving home. While Burundi forms part of the EAC customs union and has signed and ratified the AfCFTA, it has not signed the Free Movement Protocol. Its recent progress on visa openness has been largely on a unilateral basis, with the broad transition towards a policy of visa on arrival taking place late in 2021.



Burundi is a small landlocked country with a favourable economic outlook. It shares borders with the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and Tanzania, all of which are also part of the EAC. Burundi maintains a high level of openness towards its neighbors, on a reciprocal basis, offering visa-free entry to the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. The citizens of all other African countries are now eligible to obtain a visa on arrival.

Burundi does not have an e-visa system.

Burundi, scores and ranking, 2016–2022							
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Score	0.815	0.093	0.113	0.113	0.113	0.113	0.823
Rank	11	48	46	46	46	44	12

AVOI ranking: Burundi moved into the top 20 in 2022, up from 44th place in 2021 and still lower rankings in the four years prior.

2022 visa openness rate: The nationals of 100% of African countries are eligible to enter Burundi without a visa (6/54 countries) or with a visa on arrival (47/54 countries).

Visa Openness in Africa

LOOKING AHEAD

Last year's Africa Visa Openness Report was produced at a time when Africa and the world were grappling with the impact of policy interventions—including travel restrictions—made necessary by the pandemic. The restrictions eased considerably in 2022, and many countries revised their visa policies to facilitate travel. Some simply reversed the restrictions they had implemented to curb the pandemic. But others introduced an e-visa or a visa on arrival designed to encourage visitors, stimulate trade and investment, and help the continent to integrate.

Africa's integration progressed in other ways as well. Several countries ratified the African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement over the past year, bringing the number of ratifications to 44 of 54 signatories. Under the Guided Trade Initiative, the first trading under AfCFTA rules commenced. And negotiations on rules of origin are nearing completion.

These are important milestones, but for the AfCFTA to deliver on its promise to Africa's people, liberalizing the movement of goods must be accompanied by liberalizing cross-border services and mobility: not only for tourists and consumers, but also for service providers—truck drivers, suppliers of medical and engineering services, telecommunications workers, etc.—and traders and businesspeople at every scale.

Many countries have concerns about liberal visa regimes. These concerns should be addressed in a supportive and collaborative manner. Regional policies on visa openness are often more progressive than what countries practice on the continental scale. These regional initiatives must continue to be encouraged, for they serve as building blocks to wider openness.

Adopting liberal, forward-looking policies that dismantle barriers to the movement of persons, whether by embracing technology or by lowering administrative and transaction costs, will help drive Africa forward.

Visa Openness: Suggestions for 2022+

Visa solutions

- Make a visa on arrival the standard, not the exception, for visitors from across the continent
- Implement e-visa systems that use a secure, reliable platform with a guaranteed response time
- Promote regional blocs whose members reciprocate visa-free access to each other's territory
- Create regional bloc visas: visas that open a region's countries to visits by the citizens of every country that is a member of the regional bloc (as is being considered by ECOWAS)
- Offer a longer-term visa for regular and repeat travellers
- Encourage country champions that open their visa regime unilaterally to more African countries
- Simplify visa processes by automating, lowering fees, requiring fewer documents, speeding processing times, and making requirements less onerous
- Provide reliable information online on visas for different categories: tourism, business, study, exemptions
- Supply visa-related information in different languages and in an accessible format
- Consider social media as a channel to support and inform travellers

Travel document solutions

- A regional passport or national identity card for regional travel
- An African passport for businesspeople, issued by a competent authority following strict criteria
- The African Union passport for all African citizens, issued by national authorities using the criteria rolled out by the African Union in 2016

Annex 1. Visa openness in Africa: 2022 country scores and rankings

Country	VISA OPENNESS INDICATORS (by number of other African countries)			Score	Rank
	No visa required	Visa on arrival	Visa required*		
Benin	53	0	0	1.000	1
Seychelles	53	0	0	1.000	1
The Gambia	53	0	0	1.000	1
Ghana	26	26	1	0.883	4
Rwanda	18	35	0	0.868	5
Nigeria	17	36	0	0.864	6
Guinea-Bissau	13	40	0	0.849	7
Cabo Verde	16	36	1	0.845	8
Togo	14	38	1	0.838	9
Mauritania	8	45	0	0.830	10
Mauritius	27	21	5	0.826	11
Burundi	6	47	0	0.823	12
Mozambique	9	42	2	0.804	13
Comoros	0	53	0	0.800	14
Madagascar	0	52	1	0.785	15
Somalia	0	52	1	0.785	15
Ethiopia	2	49	2	0.777	17
Senegal	40	0	13	0.755	18
Djibouti	0	50	3	0.755	18
Tanzania	19	22	12	0.691	20
Namibia	13	25	15	0.623	21
Sierra Leone	13	17	23	0.502	22
Zimbabwe	17	10	26	0.472	23
Burkina Faso	16	11	26	0.468	24
Malawi	15	11	27	0.449	25
Zambia	14	11	28	0.430	26
Côte d'Ivoire	22	0	31	0.415	27
Tunisia	22	0	31	0.415	27
Mali	20	2	31	0.408	29
Uganda	20	0	33	0.377	30
Kenya	19	0	34	0.358	31
Guinea	19	0	34	0.358	31
Niger	18	0	35	0.340	33
South Africa	18	0	35	0.340	33
Botswana	17	0	36	0.321	35
Eswatini	17	0	36	0.321	35
Lesotho	16	0	37	0.302	37
Angola	10	7	36	0.294	38
Chad	14	1	38	0.279	39
Liberia	14	0	39	0.264	40
Republic of the Congo	5	8	40	0.215	41
Gabon	9	0	44	0.170	42
Central African Republic	8	0	45	0.151	43
São Tomé and Príncipe	7	0	46	0.132	44
Cameroon	7	0	46	0.132	44
Morocco	7	0	46	0.132	44
Democratic Republic of Congo	4	3	46	0.121	47
Algeria	6	0	47	0.113	48
Egypt	0	5	48	0.075	49
South Sudan	3	0	50	0.057	50
Eritrea	1	2	50	0.049	51
Sudan	0	2	51	0.030	52
Equatorial Guinea	1	0	52	0.019	53
Libya	1	0	52	0.019	53
Western Sahara					

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

Scores range from 0 to 1 (highest)

Source: Bank calculations based on IATA data, July–August 2022

Annex 2. Visa openness in Africa: Latest developments and initiatives, 2022

Country	Rank	Top 20	Offers e-visa	Ratified AfCFTA ¹²	Signed AfCFTA (not ratified) ¹²	Signed PFMP ¹³	Joined SAATM ¹⁴
Benin	1	●	●		●		●
Seychelles	1	●		●			
Gambia, The	1	●		●		●	●
Ghana	4	●		●		●	●
Rwanda	5	●	●	●		●	●
Nigeria	6	●	●	●			●
Guinea-Bissau	7	●		●			●
Cabo Verde	8	●	●	●			●
Togo	9	●		●		●	●
Mauritania	10	●		●			
Mauritius	11	●		●			
Burundi	12	●		●			
Mozambique	13	●			●	●	●
Comoros	14	●			●	●	
Madagascar	15	●	●		●		
Somalia	15	●			●	●	
Ethiopia	17	●	●	●			●
Senegal	18	●		●		●	●
Djibouti	18	●	●	●		●	
Tanzania	20	●	●	●		●	
Namibia	21			●			●
Sierra Leone	22		●	●		●	●
Zimbabwe	23		●	●		●	●
Burkina Faso	24			●		●	●
Malawi	25		●	●		●	
Zambia	26		●	●			●
Côte d'Ivoire	27		●	●		●	●
Tunisia	27			●			
Mali	29			●		●	●
Uganda	30		●	●		●	
Kenya	31		●	●		●	●
Guinea	31		●	●		●	●
Niger	33			●		●	●
South Africa	33		●	●			●
Botswana	35				●		●
Eswatini	36			●			●
Lesotho	37		●	●		●	●
Angola	38		●	●		●	
Chad	39			●		●	
Liberia	40				●	●	●
Republic of the Congo	41			●		●	●
Gabon	42		●	●		●	●
Central African Republic	43			●		●	●
São Tomé and Príncipe	44		●	●		●	
Cameroon	44		●	●			●
Morocco	44		●	●			●
Democratic Republic of Congo	47			●		●	●
Algeria	48			●			
Egypt	49		●	●			●
South Sudan	50				●	●	
Eritrea	51						
Sudan	52				●	●	
Equatorial Guinea	53			●			●
Libya	53				●	●	
Western Sahara				●			

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

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