



Africa Visa Openness Report 2019



AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK GROUP



AFRICAN UNION



“Regional integration is crucial for Africa's accelerated development.

We must connect landlocked countries to ports.

We must allow free movement of people.

Investors must be able to invest beyond the borders of countries.

And Africa must trade more with itself.

Apart and divided, Africa is weakened.

Together and united, Africa will be unstoppable!”

Akinwumi A. Adesina

President,

African Development Bank Group¹

Africa Visa Openness Index



The Africa Visa Openness Index

measures how open African countries are when it comes to visas by looking at what they ask of citizens from other countries in Africa when they travel. It aims to show at a

glance which countries are facilitating travel for citizens of other countries and how; whether they allow people to travel to their country without a visa, if travellers can get a visa on arrival in the country, or if visitors need to get a visa before travel.

Data on visa openness was collected in June and July 2019. The primary source of information was from official country websites and the International Air Transport Association (IATA).

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

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

Methodology

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

Index categories:

- Visa required
- Visa on arrival
- No visa

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

Index category indicators based on 54 African countries:*

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

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

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

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

Contents

The High 5 for transforming Africa	4
Foreword, African Development Bank	5
African Union's Agenda 2063	6
Foreword, African Union Commission	7
Visa openness in Africa	9
Trends on visa openness	9
Visa openness findings, 2019	10
Regional overview, 2019	14
Regional mobility across Africa	15
Visa openness progress, 2016-2019	16
Top 10/20 countries	16
Visa openness: top performers and reformers, 2016-2019	18
Case studies: countries moving up in 2019	20
Ethiopia	20
Senegal	21
Ghana	21
Countries that most improved, 2016-2019	22
Angola	22
Benin	22
Gabon	22
Tunisia	22
São Tomé and Príncipe	23
Countries looking to open up on visas	23
Botswana	23
Namibia	23
Global context for visa openness	24
Visa openness solutions in 2019+	24
Forward look	25

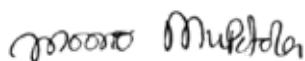
Acknowledgements

The 2019 *Africa Visa Openness Index* – now in its fourth edition – is the joint work of the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the African Union Commission (AUC).

The latest report ties into developments on regional integration across Africa, from the African Continental Free Trade Area entering into force to the signing of the Single African Air Transport Market and the Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons. This edition highlights the strong progress being made to open up borders at country and regional level for Africans to travel.

Special thanks goes to the AfDB and AUC senior management for their vocal championing of an open Africa where business people, investors and all Africans can travel freely on the continent; their leadership in driving regional integration efforts remains invaluable. The project was led by Jean-Guy Afrika and Zodwa Florence Mabuza and benefitted from the guidance of Abdu Mukhtar and Andoh Mensah. M. Anitha Jaotody and Hermann Fofié Kouamé provided valuable support in calculating and updating the Index. Warm acknowledgement goes to Pangeiko Johanna Nautwima, Souleima Abdennebi, Monica Armah Aryeetey and Tehua Kobenan Koffi for contributing to the data review process.

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



Moono Mupotola

Director,

Regional Development and Regional Integration

The High 5 for transforming Africa²

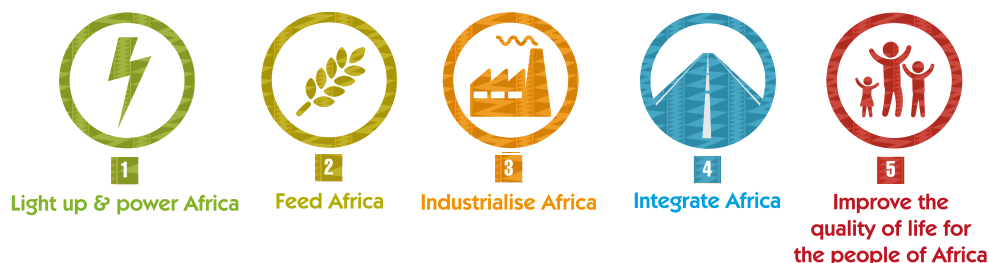
"Our work, together with the African Union Commission and the Regional Economic Communities, on the Africa Visa Openness Index, continues to monitor how Africa is doing on free movement of people. Progress is being made but much still needs to be done. To integrate Africa, we should bring down all the walls! The free movement of people, and especially labor mobility, are crucial for promoting investments."

Akinwumi A. Adesina

President,

African Development Bank Group³

Integrating Africa is one of the Bank's five priority areas⁴



The African Development Bank High 5 priorities are helping to fast-track the UN Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063 in Africa.

Alongside the other High 5s, the Bank is investing in regional integration from Abidjan to Nairobi, and Tunis to Johannesburg, guided by the Bank's Regional Integration Strategic Framework.

Africa's regional integration was the theme underpinning both the Bank's Annual Meetings in May 2019, and the Bank's *Annual Development Effectiveness Review 2019*. Regional operations represent 28% of the Bank's African Development Fund (ADF) pipeline of disbursements for 37 low-income countries on the continent.⁵ Going forward, this regional focus is set to continue with the next phase of the replenishment of ADF 15.

The Bank's creation and promotion of the *Africa Visa Openness Index*, together with the African Union Commission, has been championing people-centred integration efforts on the continent. Supporting African countries to provide liberal access for African citizens makes more than good business sense. The free movement of business people, investors and travellers correlates strongly with levels of investment, growth in the travel and tourism industry, and economic development by providing more jobs and securing livelihoods.



The Africa Investment Forum, supported by the Bank, is helping to deliver closer economic integration, with the 2019 Market Days being held in Johannesburg from 11-13 November.

In 2018, the Forum secured record levels of interest in deals worth billions of dollars in just under 72 hours.⁶ At the event, 63 projects valued at USD 46.9 billion from 24 countries and across seven sectors were discussed involving investors, project sponsors and government representatives. In turn, investment interest was secured for 49 projects worth USD 38.7 billion.⁷



Foreword, African Development Bank

There is no more debate. Countries and regions across Africa have realized the value of supporting Africans to travel more freely on the continent and are breaking down borders.

When the *Africa Visa Openness Index* started tracking how open African countries were for other African travellers, it was clear that urgent action was needed. Four years' on, progress is undeniable; for the first time Africans now have liberal access to 51% of the continent.

In 2019, a record 47 countries improved or maintained their visa openness scores, which on average are rising year-on-year. Today, African travellers no longer need a visa to travel to a quarter of other African countries, whereas visa-free travel was only possible to a fifth of the continent in 2016. While the top 10 and top 20 continue to champion open visa policies, more countries in all regions are following this model, including most recently Africa's upper-middle-income countries. To streamline the travellers' experience, 21 countries Africa-wide now provide eVisa platforms boosting transparency and accessibility.

Thanks to Index data, decision-makers and policymakers across the continent have been empowered to take action to relax their visa regimes for African visitors with striking results. The 2019 top performers on visa openness rank among the top countries for foreign direct investment in Africa, and benefit from strong levels of growth, including in the tourism sector.

But the ambition should not stop here. Global challenges, from inequality to climate change, are having a significant impact in Africa as well as elsewhere. Our action to meet the Bank's High 5 priorities and deliver the UN Sustainable Development Goals matters more than ever.

Now, as Africa paves a pathway to prosperity with the African Continental Free Trade Area, we are all responsible for accelerating its progress. Integration depends on investments and interconnectivity, and it is imperative that Africa's population moves with greater freedom. The Africa Investment Forum, championed by the Bank, is part of this big vision of attracting investments to the continent, with the 2019 Market Days being held on 11-13 November.

The Bank, together with the African Union, is proud of changing the policy landscape on visa openness in Africa. From simple solutions to bold benefits, an open Africa is both viable and vital.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'K. Sherif'.

Dr. Khaled F. Sherif

Vice-President,

Regional Development, Integration and Business Delivery

African Union's Agenda 2063⁸

ASPIRATION 2.

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

20. We aspire that by 2063, Africa shall:

Be a United Africa;

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

Have dynamic and mutually beneficial links
with her Diaspora; and

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

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

A CALL TO ACTION

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

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



AFRICAN UNION

"It cannot be stressed enough how crucial integration is for the development of the continent and the fulfilment of its people's aspiration to well-being. I congratulate those Member States that have taken measures to ease the procedures for the entry of African nationals into their territories, and urge those that have not yet done so to join this growing momentum."

Moussa Faki Mahamat
Chairperson,
African Union Commission⁹

In 2019, the strong progress made under Agenda 2063's Flagship Projects was connected to creating an open Africa without borders. Further easing restrictions on the movement of people by adopting visa openness policies will help to capitalize on all these developments.

African Continental Free Trade Area

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) moved into its operational phase on 7 July 2019 at an Extraordinary Summit of the African Union, with plans for trading under the Agreement due to begin on 1 July 2020.¹⁰ The AfCFTA will be one of the largest free trade areas in the world, covering 1.2 billion people, growing to 2.5 billion by 2050.¹¹ Empowering Africa's population to travel will be vital to facilitate both trade flows and capital investment.

Protocol on Free Movement of Persons in Africa

The Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons, which also covers the right of residence and establishment on the continent, had been signed by 32 countries as of mid-July 2019.¹² At the same time, the African Passport, which has been launched for African heads of state, continued to move ahead with production plans put in place to roll this out to all citizens.

"Coming up in 2019, #AU Commission will present, for adoption, guidelines on the design, production & issuance of the #African #passport, taking us one step closer to the long-held dream of complete free movement across the continent."

Kwesi Quartey
Deputy Chairperson,
African Union Commission¹³

Single African Air Transport Market

Ease of intra-African mobility features as one of the pillars for the success of the Single African Air Transport Market, which to date has been signed by 28 countries Africa-wide.¹⁴ By boosting air connectivity on the continent, more African passengers will see journey and waiting times cut by over 20%,¹⁵ while growth and jobs under tourism will continue to rise.



Foreword, African Union Commission

The question is no longer whether an Africa with seamless borders is within reach, but how soon this will be, is the case.

The speed with which countries have moved to operationalize the landmark African Continental Free Trade Area in 2019, is testament to the leadership of countries Africa-wide. The growing momentum to sign the Single African Air Transport Market and the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons is encouraging, and I urge all countries to take action to do so.

It is clear that the aspiration for an integrated Africa, with free movement of people, as set out in Agenda 2063, remains unchanged. In 2019, the African Union Commission also moved further ahead on the development and production of the African passport for all citizens. In this context, the *Africa Visa Openness Index*, jointly developed by the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank, now in its fourth edition, plays a pivotal role.

The 2019 findings show that African countries are increasingly open to African travellers. The majority of countries and regions have made steady progress across all visa openness indicators, with 13 countries having moved upwards in rank on the Index in 2019.

This latest Report shows that Seychelles and Benin remain the top two countries on visa openness in Africa, with their visa-free policy for all African visitors. In 2019, countries showed that dramatic changes are possible with a simple policy shift. Ethiopia for example, has moved up by a record 32 places on the Index, and entered the top 20 most visa-open countries in Africa.

An African continent without travel and document restrictions should be an Africa we can be proud of. Here, an African business traveller can meet contacts in another capital at a moment's notice; an African family can visit eco-tourism sites in a neighboring country with ease; and African students can move freely across national borders to gain the labour market skills they need.

As Africa's integration milestones usher in an era of closer cooperation and connectivity for all African citizens, it is time to collectively take down the barriers that remain and reap the benefits.

"The thesis, *Africa Must Unite*, remains unassailable."

Kwame Nkrumah, Africa Must Unite, 1963

H.E Kwesi Quartey
Deputy Chairperson,
African Union Commission

Definitions

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

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

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

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

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

Visa overview

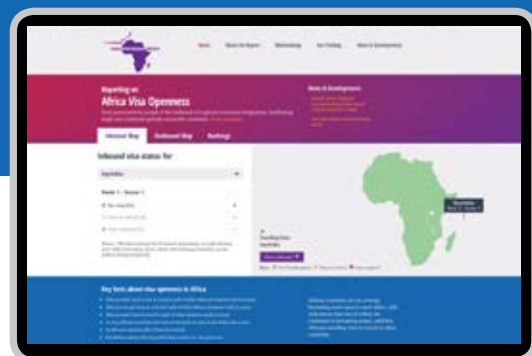
VISA OPENNESS means how easy it is for visitors to travel to a country when it comes to visas.

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

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

Glossary

ADF	African Development Fund
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AfDB	African Development Bank Group
AUC	African Union Commission
AU	African Union
CEMAC	Central African Economic and Monetary Union
CEN-SAD	Community of Sahel-Saharan States
EAC	East African Community
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
eVisa	Electronic visa
FDI	Foreign direct investment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IATA	International Air Transport Association
PFMP	Protocol on Free Movement of Persons
REC	Regional Economic Community
SAATM	Single African Air Transport Market
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise
UMA	Arab Maghreb Union
UMIC	Upper middle-income country
UN	United Nations
UNWTO	World Tourism Organization
USD	United States dollar
WTTC	World Travel and Tourism Council



Visa openness platform

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

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



Visa openness in Africa

Interconnectivity, investment and integration on the continent reached new heights in 2019, as bold developments took hold with the African Continental Free Trade Area, the African Investment Forum and progress on Africa's air transport market and freedom of movement.

Africa's economic growth, estimated at 3.5% in 2018, is due to reach 4% in 2019 and 4.1% in 2020, with African governments, businesses and travellers all driving this momentum.¹⁶ The backdrop on all fronts is looking bright; investment increased its contribution to Africa's GDP from 14% to 48% in 2018,¹⁷ while the region continued to show the highest number of business reforms worldwide with a record 104 reforms made across 40 economies in 2018.¹⁸

Opening up countries and regions for people to move freely matters as part of this equation. Following progress in easing the movement of people, Africa was the second fastest growing tourism region in 2018, with growth of 5.6%, against a global average of 3.9%.¹⁹ African countries have continued to allow the global population greater freedom to travel on the continent. In 2008, 88% of the world population needed to obtain a visa before travelling to Africa, while in 2018 only 45% of global travellers had to do so, according to the UNWTO.²⁰

For the first time, this is being matched by progress shown in the 2019 *Africa Visa Openness Index*, as Africans gain liberal access to over half of other African countries. This in turn will drive trade, investment and tourism, especially as 40% of Africa's international tourists come from the continent.²¹

Thanks to the barriers breaking down across boundaries, countries and regions Africa-wide will be able to share in the greater economic prosperity within reach.

Trends on visa openness

There is no longer a debate on whether there are benefits in relaxing a country's visa regime. The growing momentum on visa openness in Africa is a signpost that policymakers have bought into the gains from making it easier for African businessmen and women, investors, students and tourists to travel. This continues to be the case for the continent's low-income economies and, more recently, for Africa's upper-middle-income economies that are signalling their intentions to open up their visa regimes for other African travellers.

In recent years and in line with global trends, more African countries have adopted visa-on-arrival policies for Africans, which is lowering the administrative burden for travellers. At the same time, more countries on the continent have been adopting new technologies and introducing eVisas. As digital systems bolster national security and regional cooperation, these developments allow African visitors to benefit from a smoother travel experience.

Visa openness findings, 2019

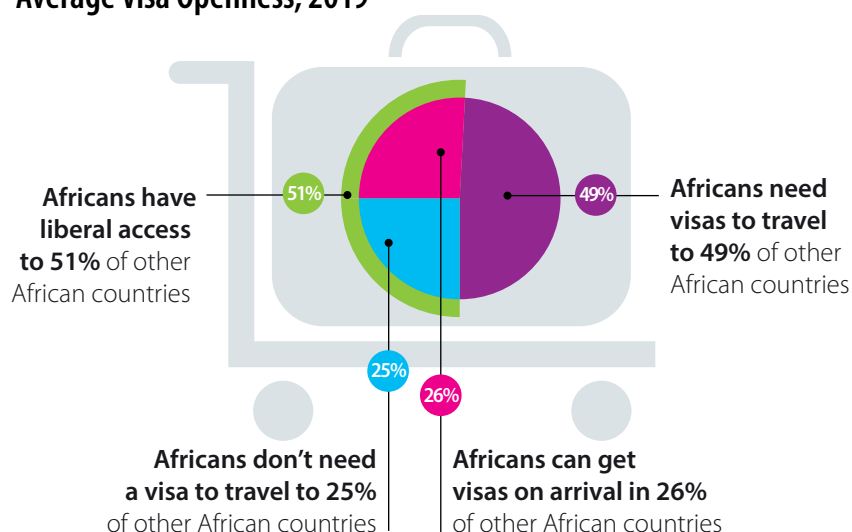
African countries are becoming increasingly open to visitors from across the continent, as the majority of countries and regions make steady progress on all visa openness indicators.

On average since 2016, African travellers can get visas on arrival in more African countries, and they can travel visa-free to a quarter of the continent.

For the first time, Africans have liberal access to 51% of the continent and need visas to travel to less than half of other African countries.

Moving forward, championing greater visa openness across Africa will help to capitalize on the gains to be realized from the launch of the African Continental Free Trade Area, the Single African Air Transport Market and the Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons.

Average Visa Openness, 2019



Average visa openness

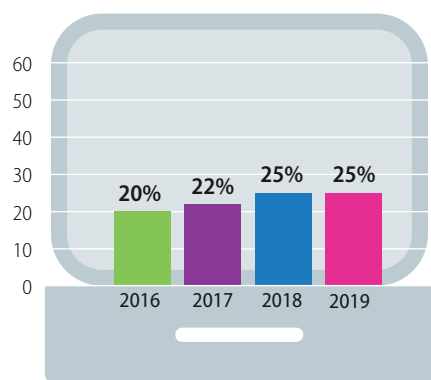
- **Africans do not need a visa to travel to 25% of other African countries** (also 25% in 2018, and up from 22% in 2017 and 20% in 2016).
- **Africans can get visas on arrival in 26% of other African countries** (up from 24% in 2018 and 2017 and 25% in 2016).
- **Africans need visas to travel to 49% of other African countries** (down from 51% in 2018 and 54% in 2017, and 55% in 2016).

Average Visa Openness scores, 2019

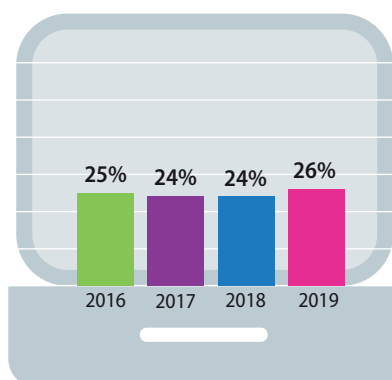


Change in Visa Openness scores, 2016-2019, %

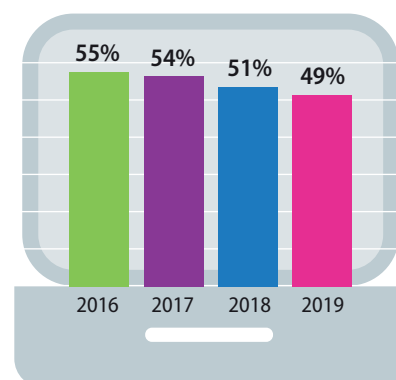
Africans don't need visas to travel to other African countries



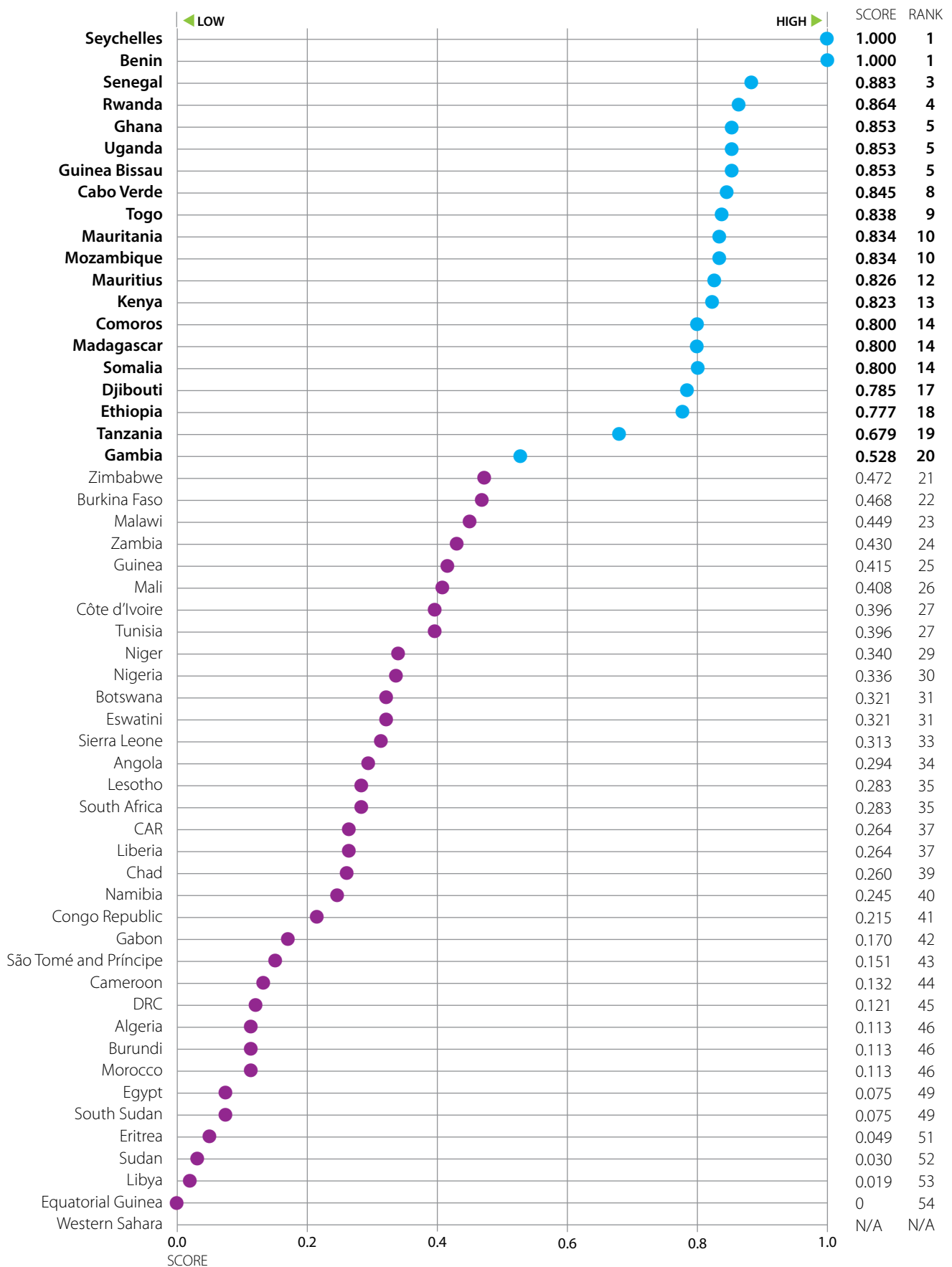
Africans can get visas on arrival in other African countries



Africans need visas to travel to other African countries



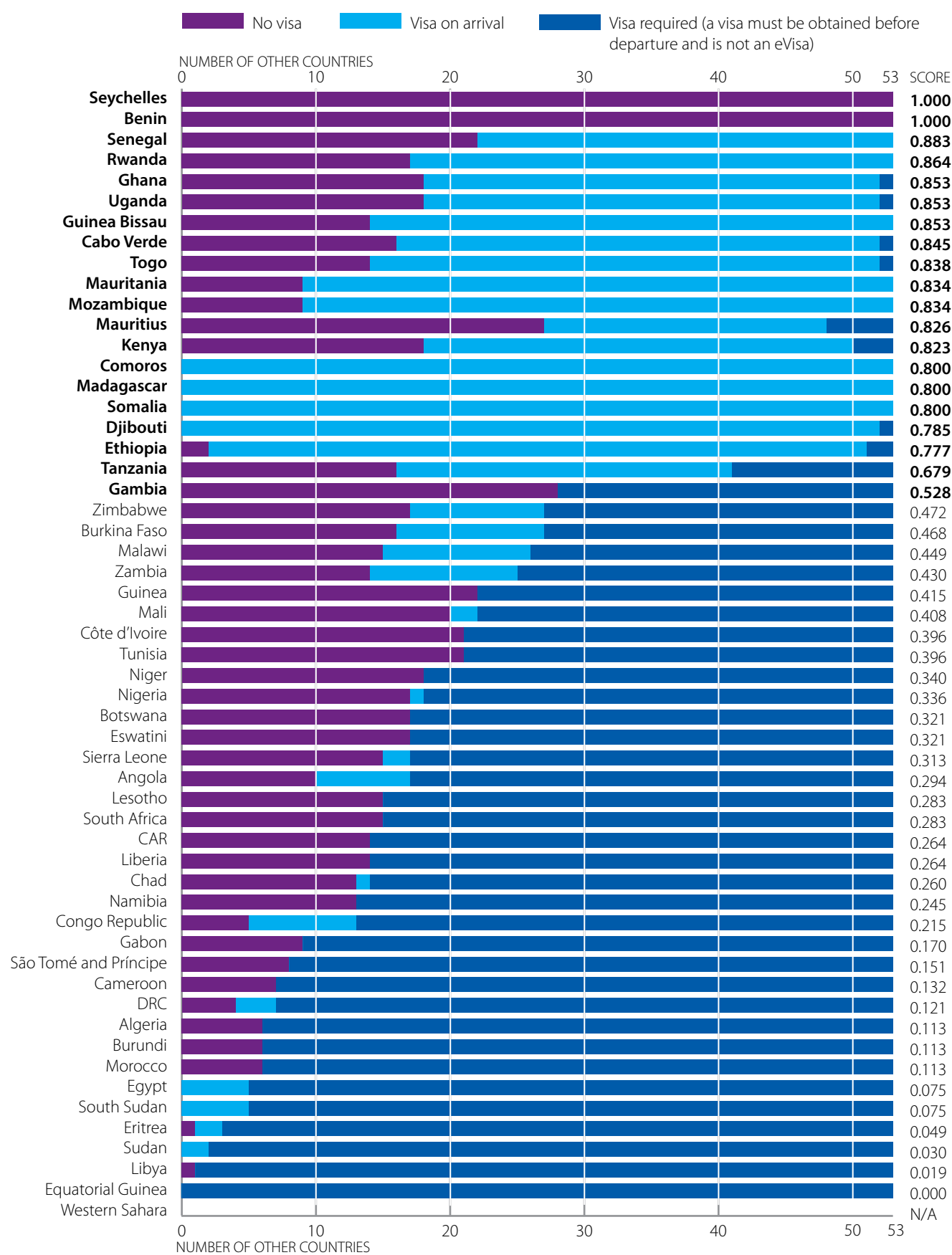
Visa openness in Africa 2019: country scores and ranking



Scores range from 0-1 (highest possible)

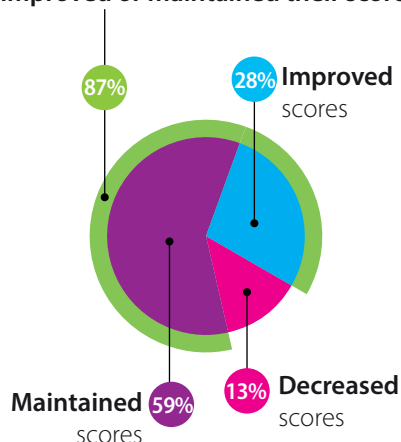
Source : AfDB calculation based on data obtained from IATA – June-July, 2019.

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

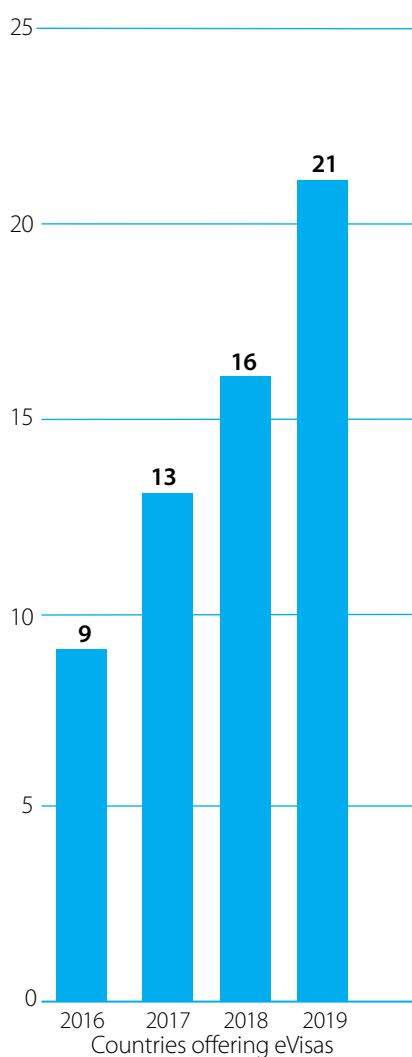


Improvement in country score, 2018-2019, % of countries

87% of African countries either improved or maintained their score



Progress in use of eVisas, no. of countries, 2016-2019



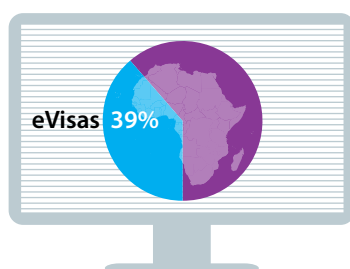
Access overview

The average visa openness score for all countries continued to rise in 2019, even though the number of countries offering liberal access to all Africans stayed the same or decreased slightly.

- **Average score for all countries is 0.459** (up from 0.443 in 2018, 0.420 in 2017, and 0.425 in 2016).
- **Two African countries, Seychelles and Benin, offer visa-free access to all Africans** (also two in 2018, one in 2017 and 2016).
- **10 African countries offer liberal access (visa-free or visa on arrival) to all Africans** (down from 11 in 2018, 10 in 2017 and 13 in 2016).
- **Three African countries offer visa on arrival to all Africans** (four in 2018 and 2017, and three in 2016).

eVisas

The number of countries offering eVisas increased by 31% in 2019, with 21 countries now hosting an online platform. Two-thirds of countries that offer eVisas also made the most progress on visa openness since 2016, with the majority having recently introduced the system.

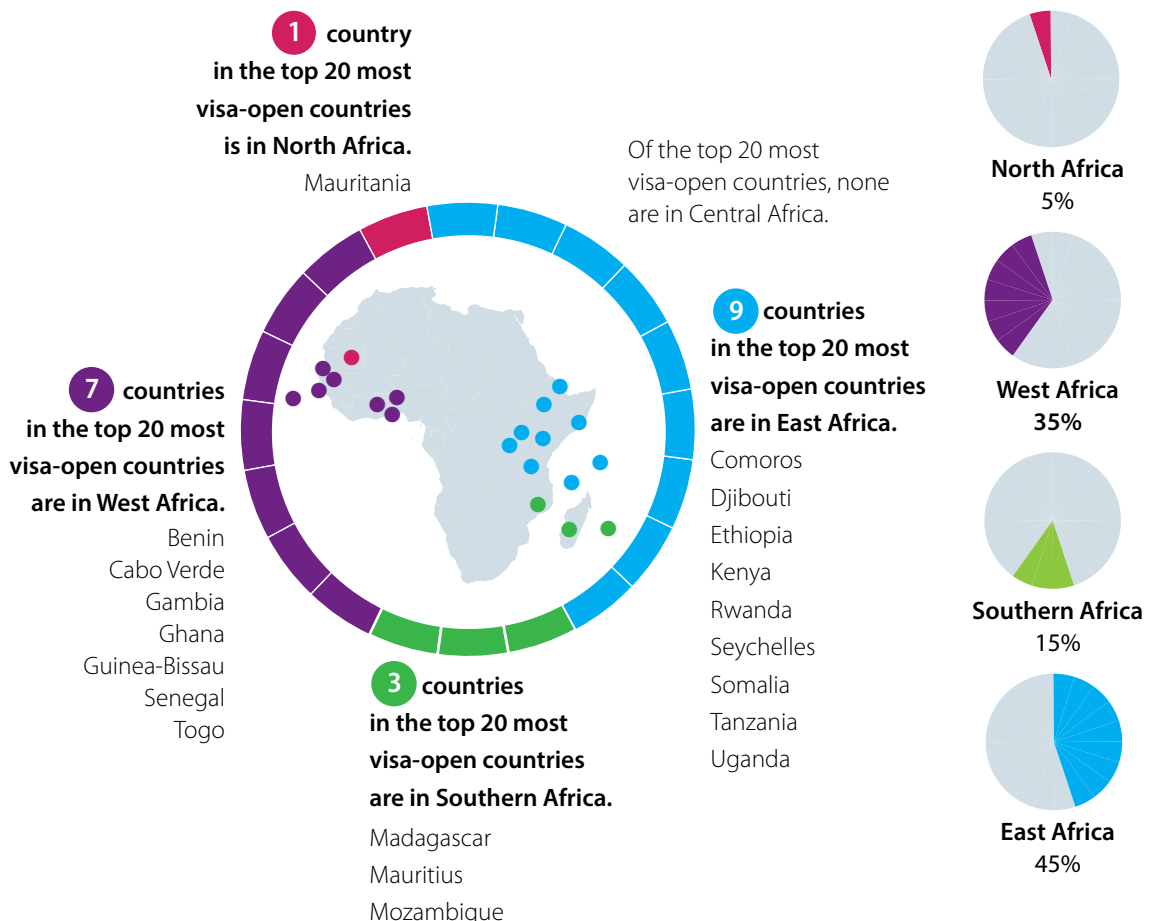


- **21 African countries out of 54 (39%) offer eVisas** (up from 16 in 2018, 13 in 2017, and 9 in 2016).
- **Nine out of the top 20 countries offer eVisas.**
- **Two-thirds of the countries that offer eVisas improved their visa openness scores** the most since 2016 or remained in the top 20.
- **64% of countries that improved their visa openness scores** the most since 2016 or remained in the top 20 introduced eVisas in the last three years.

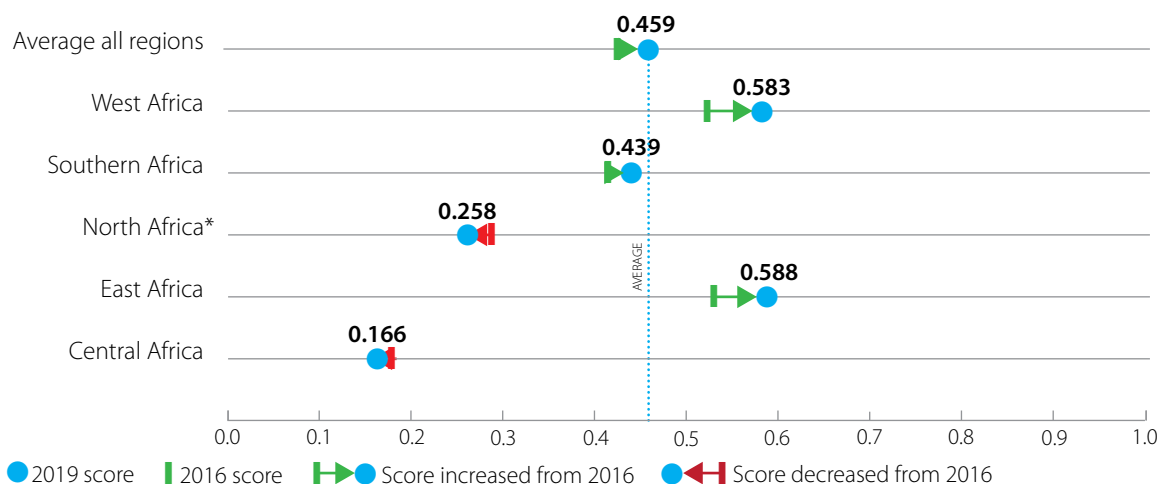
Regional overview, 2019

In 2019, open reciprocity scores across the continent continued to rise, and the top performing RECs maintained or improved their open reciprocity scores. All regions, apart from Central Africa, continue to feature in the top 20 most visa-open countries in the Index.

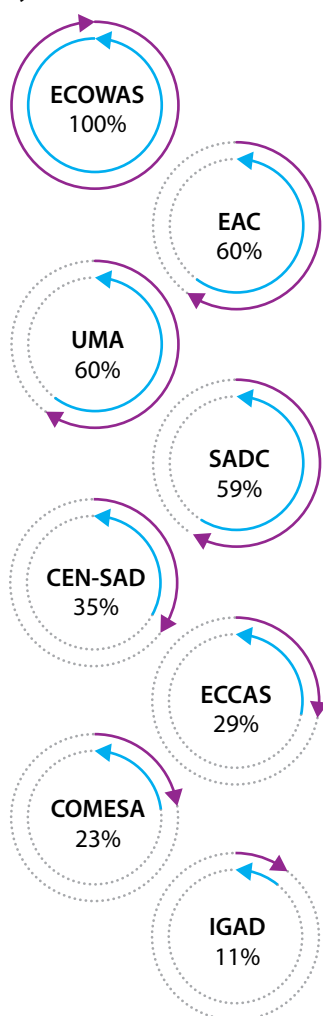
Top 20 most visa-open countries by region, 2019



Regional progress in Visa Openness scores, averages 2016-2019



Reciprocity of visa policies by RECs, 2019 (%)



■ **Open reciprocity** (measuring no visa' policies) Africa-wide was 20% (up from 19% in 2018 and 17% in 2017). Closed reciprocity Africa-wide was 30% (down from 33% in 2018 and 36% in 2017).

■ **Top performing Regional Economic Communities (RECs)** on open reciprocity include: ECOWAS (100%), EAC (60%), UMA (60%) and SADC (59%).

Regional mobility across Africa

Against the backdrop of Agenda 2063 and progress realized with the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, there were positive developments across Africa in easing the mobility of African citizens across the continent. A number of Africa's regional blocs also showed improvements.

Continent-wide, Africa's open reciprocity (measuring 'no visa' policies) rose to 20% (up from 19% in 2018 and 17% in 2017), while closed reciprocity stood at 30% (down from 33% in 2018 and 36% in 2017).

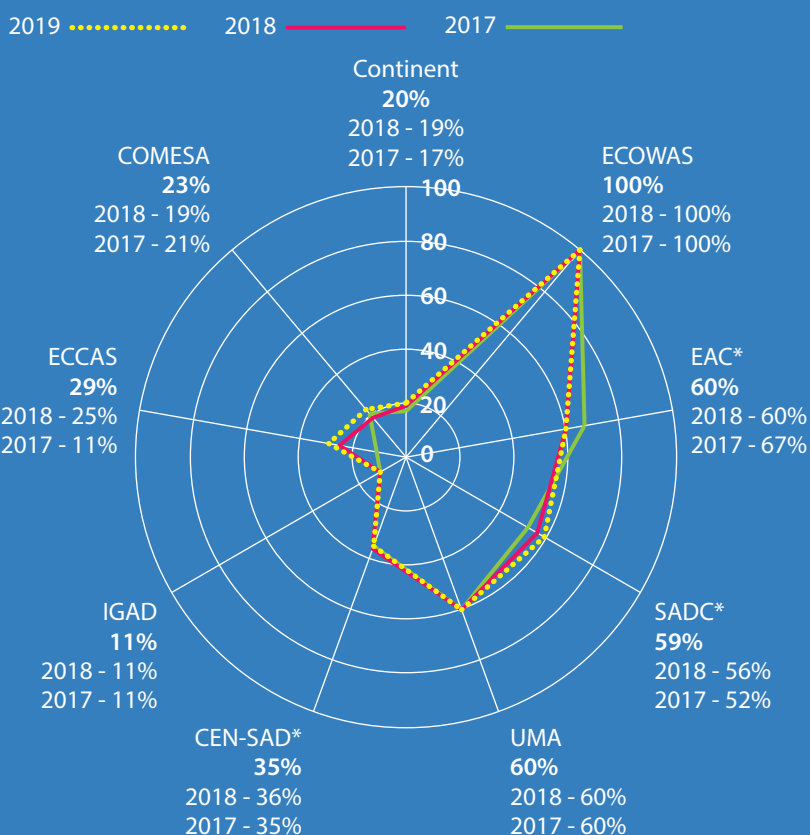
Across Africa's RECs, four maintained their open reciprocity scores, while three continued to improve their scores between 2016-19.

In 2019, the top performing RECs – as was the case in 2018 and 2017 – were ECOWAS (100%), EAC (60%), UMA (60%) and SADC (59%).

SADC moved higher with an open reciprocity score of 59%, up from 56% in 2018 and 52% in 2017. Meanwhile, ECCAS totalled 29% open reciprocity, up from 25% in 2018 and 11% in 2017, and COMESA increased its score to 23% (up from 19% in 2018 and 21% in 2017).

As highlighted in the *African Economic Outlook 2019*, for integration initiatives such as the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons to be successful, each REC can improve the effectiveness of its policies before scaling up efforts continent-wide.²² Opportunities exist for RECs to promote visa-free regional blocs or regional bloc visas from the menu of visa openness solutions.

Progress in reciprocity of visa policies, % by RECs, 2017-2019



*CENSAD, EAC and SADC reciprocity scores vary slightly from previous editions due to adjustments and changes in RECs membership.

Visa openness progress, 2016-2019

In 2019, the trend for African countries to further liberalize their visa regimes continued, promoting greater ease of travel for visitors across the continent. A record 87% of African countries either improved or maintained their score, an increase of 9% from the 2018 findings.

Most of the countries that made the greatest progress on visa openness since 2016 are strong adopters of technology to facilitate visitors' access to the country through eVisas.

Another of Africa's upper-middle-income economies joined the countries that have made the most progress on visas in recent years, while more have expressed their wish to do so.

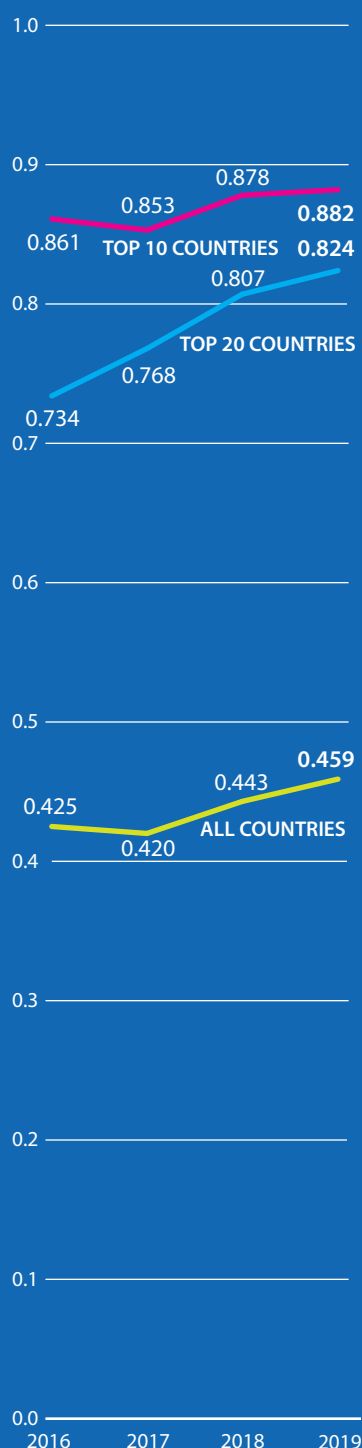
■ **47 countries improved or maintained their score** (43 countries in 2018 and 47 in 2017).

■ **13 countries moved upwards in rank on the Index** (14 in 2018 and 12 in 2017).

■ **13 countries that made the most progress on the Index between 2016-2019 also offer eVisas** (Angola, Benin, Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Kenya, Rwanda, São Tomé and Príncipe, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Tunisia and Zimbabwe).

■ **Gabon, an upper-middle-income country (UMIC), joined the list of African countries opening up on visas, alongside Mauritius, another UMIC and already a top performer. Two other UMICs, Botswana and Namibia, are looking to liberalize their visa regimes.**

Progress in average visa openness scores, 2016-2019



Top 10/20 countries

The top 10 and top 20 countries continued to improve their average visa openness scores in 2019, as more countries adopted liberal access policies for other Africans. At the same time, 85% of the top 20 countries are also the most open African countries to global visitors. Over half of the top 20 countries hold the most favourable passports for African travel, suggesting that more liberal policies can promote their own citizens' ease to travel.

Close to half or over half of the top 20 countries in the Index are champions of the continent's regional integration milestones, including the African Continental Free Trade Area, the Single African Air Transport Market and the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons in Africa.

- **Seychelles and Benin are the top performing countries**, offering visa-free access to all Africans.
- **One new country from East Africa, Ethiopia**, entered the top 20 most visa-open countries.
- **Average score for the top 10 countries** is 0.882 (up from 0.878 in 2018, 0.853 in 2017, and 0.861 in 2016).
- **Average score for the top 20 countries** is 0.824 (up from 0.807 in 2018, 0.768 in 2017, and 0.734 in 2016).
- **17 out of the top 20 most open African countries** for African travellers are also in the top 20 least restrictive African destinations for global travellers.²³
- **11 out of the top 20 countries** hold the most favourable passports to travel across Africa.

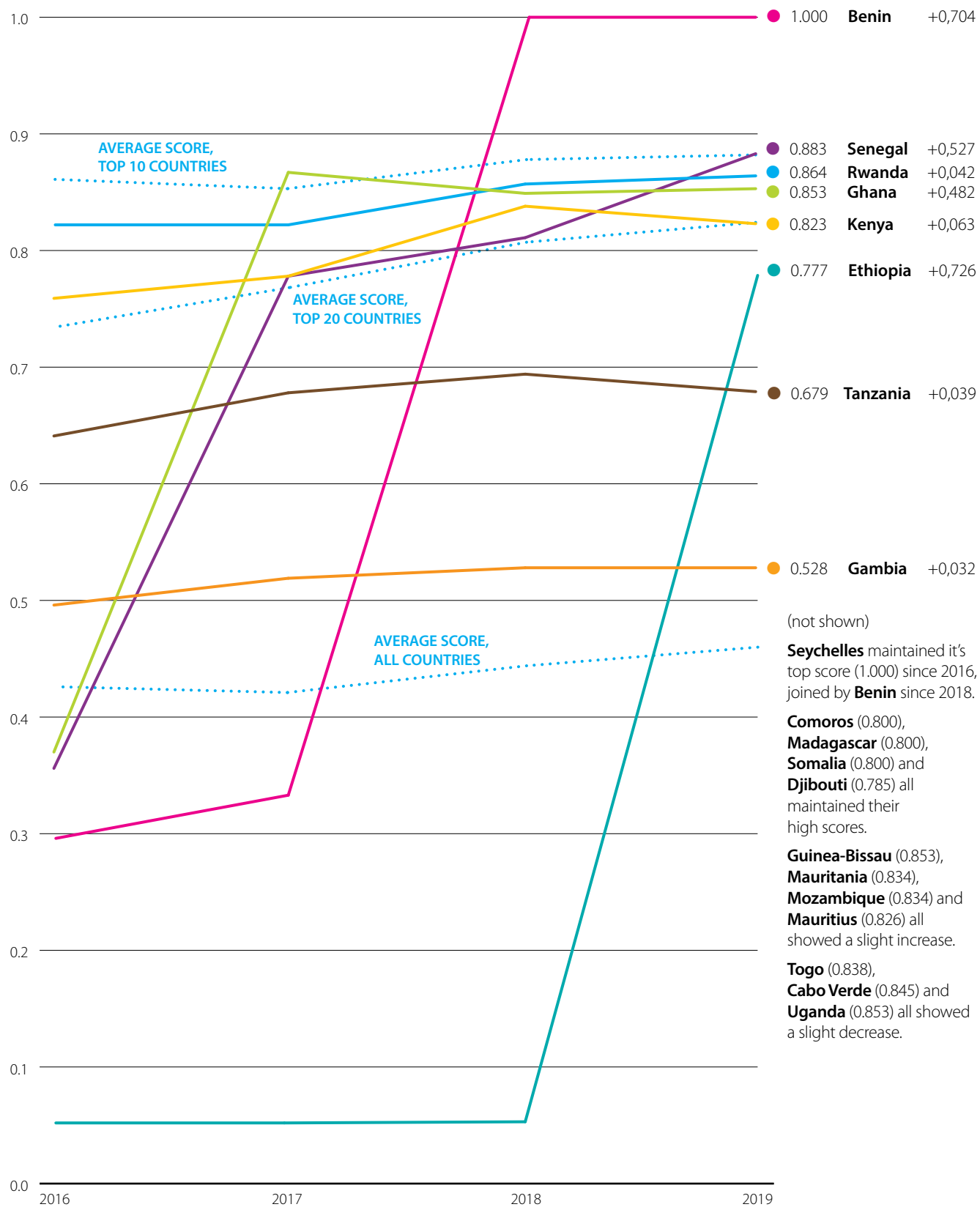
Regional integration

- **12 out of the top 20 countries** have signed the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons.²⁴
- **10 out of the top 20 countries** have ratified the African Continental Free Trade Area.²⁵
- **Nine out of the top 20 countries** have signed the Single African Air Transport Market.²⁶

Income and geography

- **18 of the top 20 countries** are low-income or lower-middle income economies.
- **Seven out of eight** of Africa's upper-middle income economies have low visa openness scores.
- **Five out of six** of Africa's island states are in the top 20 countries.

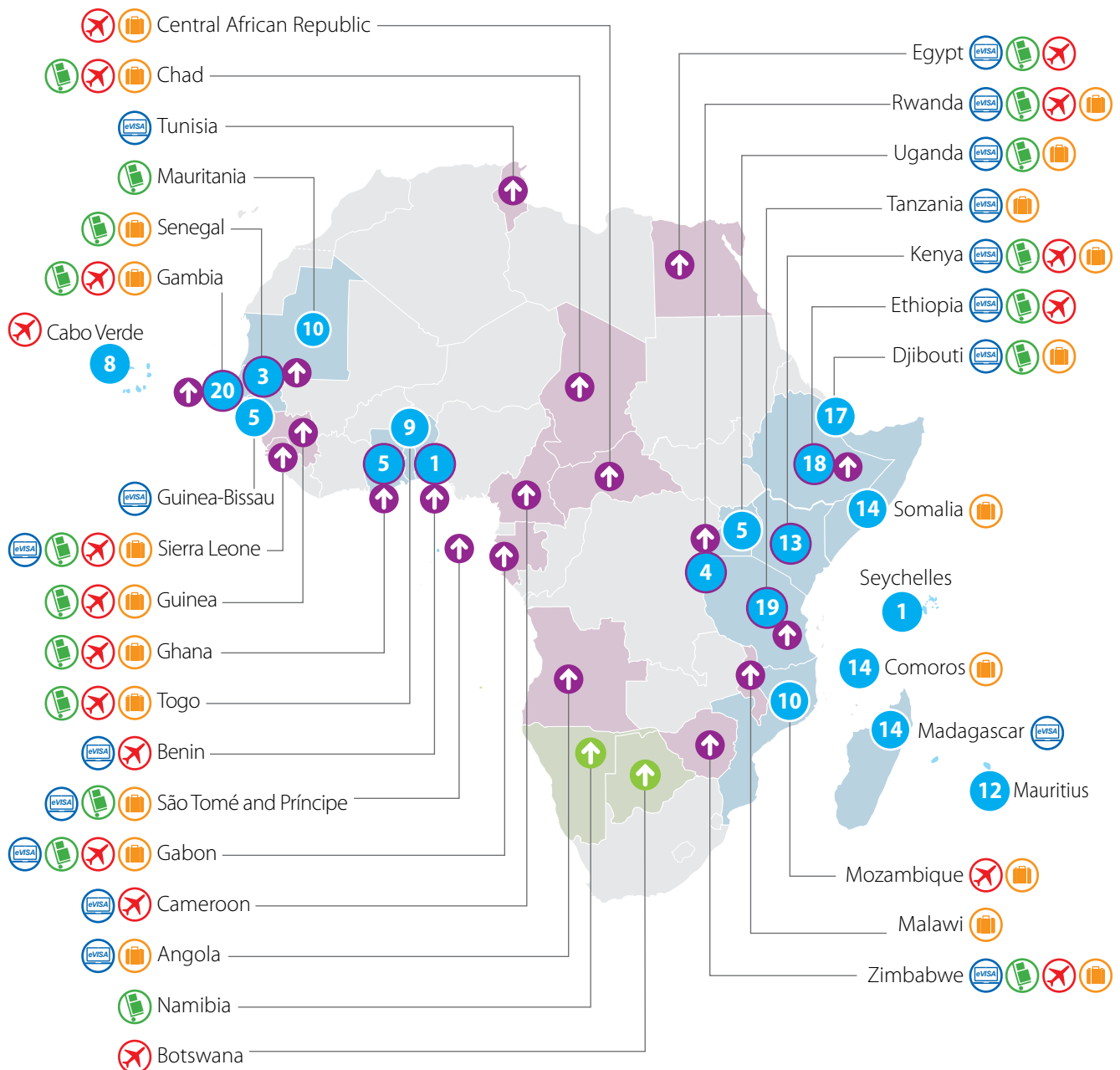
Progress of 2019 top 20 scoring countries, 2016-2019



Visa openness in Africa: top performers and reformers, 2016-2019

- 1 2019 Top 20 countries on visa openness and rank
- 1 Most improved visa openness scores within the 2019 Top 20 countries and rank
- ↑ Countries who most improved their visa openness scores, 2016-2019
- ↑ Countries looking to open up on visas, 2019

- eVISA Country offers an eVisa
- 📄 Country has ratified the African Continental Free Trade Area
- ✈️ Country has agreed to join the Single African Air Transport Market
- 👤 Country has signed the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons



Top performers and reformers, 2016-2019: innovations and AU initiatives

Country	Visa openness rank, 2019	Top 20 2019	↑	↑	eVisa available	Ratified AfCFTA	Joined SAATM	Signed PFMP
Angola*	34		●		●			●
Benin*	1	●	●		●		●	
Cabo Verde	8	●					●	
Botswana*	31			●			●	
Cameroon	44		●		●		●	
CAR	37		●				●	●
Chad	39		●			●	●	●
Comoros	14	●						●
Djibouti	17	●			●	●		●
Egypt	49		●		●	●	●	
Ethiopia*	18	●	●		●	●	●	
Gabon*	42		●		●	●	●	●
Gambia	20	●	●			●	●	●
Ghana*	5	●	●			●	●	●
Guinea	25		●			●	●	●
Guinea-Bissau	5	●			●			
Kenya	13	●	●		●	●	●	●
Madagascar	14	●			●			
Malawi	23		●					●
Mauritania	10	●				●		
Mauritius	12	●						
Mozambique	10	●					●	●
Namibia*	40			●		●		
Rwanda	4	●	●		●	●	●	●
São Tomé and Príncipe*	43		●		●	●		●
Senegal*	3	●	●			●		●
Seychelles	1	●						
Sierra Leone	33		●		●	●	●	●
Somalia	14	●						●
Tanzania	19	●	●		●			●
Togo	9	●				●	●	●
Tunisia*	27		●		●			
Uganda	5	●			●	●		●
Zimbabwe	21		●		●	●	●	●

*See pages 20-23.

Of these 34 top performers and reformers:

53%



18 countries have ratified the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

53%



18 countries have agreed to join the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM).

62%



21 countries have signed the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons (PFMP).



Case studies: countries moving up in 2019

Ethiopia



- **Ethiopia joined the top 20 countries** moving up 32 places
- **2019 Index ranking:** no.18 (up from no.50 in 2018, no.49 in 2017, and no.46 in 2016).
- **2019 Liberal access** (visa-free or visa on arrival to Africans): 96% (up from 6% in 2018, 6% in 2017, and 6% in 2016).

Ethiopia moved into the top 20 countries, rising a record 32 places since the 2018 edition of the *Africa Visa Openness Index*, and multiplying its score by 14 with 96% liberal access.

The country, which is home to one of the continent's political hubs, aims to further boost the regional integration agenda through the introduction of a visa-on-arrival policy for all African Union member states. This follows Ethiopia's ratification of the African Continental Free Trade Area in April 2019, and signing of the Single African Air Transport Market.

"Consistent with PM Abiy Ahmed's vision of a closer and full regional integration in #Africa—where minds are open to ideas and markets are open to trade, Ethiopia will start on arrival visa to all Africans starting from November 9, 2018. #Ethiopia @AfricanUnion"

Fitsum Aregaa
Chief of Staff to the Prime Minister,
Ethiopia²⁷

These moves come on the back of Prime Minister Ahmed's widely welcomed decision in June 2018 to allow all global visitors to apply for visas to the country online through a modernized eVisa system.

The eVisa website is clearly signposted helping travellers to access information, and the government posts social media updates on its visa reforms. Ethiopia ranks in the top 20 least restrictive destinations in Africa according to the UNWTO.²⁸

Another driver for the country's policy to relax its visa regime has been to promote fresh economic opportunities linked to the travel and tourism industry, including in the hospitality and conference sectors. This is being supported by the high volumes of transit traffic passing through Bole International Airport on premier national carrier Ethiopian Airlines, which was identified as a leading Africa-to-Africa investment business champion by the AfDB.²⁹

"Ethiopia has officially launched Visa-On-Arrival service for tourists from all African Union member states. Nationals of African Union member states can pay the visa fee in cash at Bole International Airport to get tourist visa."

<https://www.evisa.gov.et/#/visa-on-arrival>

As a result, in the last year, the country's travel and tourism economy witnessed the largest growth of any country worldwide according to the World Travel & Tourism Council.³⁰ Growing by a record 48.6% in 2018, the sector makes up 9.4% of Ethiopia's total economy.

The country's dynamic economic growth has been mirrored in a rise in its score and rank in the World Bank Group's *Doing Business Index*, including through national reforms to make it easier to start a business, to deal with construction permits and to enforce contracts.³¹



Senegal



- Senegal moved into the top 10 countries in the Index
- **2019 Index ranking:** no.3 (up from no.13 in 2018, no.15 in 2017, and no.24 in 2016).
- **2019 Liberal access** (visa-free or visa on arrival to Africans): 100% (up from 81% in 2018, 78% in 2017, and 37% in 2016).

Senegal continued to move up the *Africa Visa Openness Index*, rising into the top 10 countries in 2019. The move has been a result of Senegal's recent policy of introducing visas on arrival for a number of African countries and removing visas required before travel.

The relaxation of the visa regime is in line with the country's priority to grow the tourism sector, bringing greater economic advantages and more jobs for people nationwide, following President Macky Sall's 30-year *Plan Sénégal Emergent* introduced five years ago.

"In total, the tourism sectors supports 150,000 people in Senegal, and I hope that this figure can be multiplied four-fold. That represents 10% of GDP. We must aim to reach between 12 and 15% in five years' time."

Alioune Sarr

Minister for Tourism and Air Transport,
Senegal³²

The travel and tourism sector rose by 2.7% in 2018, according to the World Travel & Tourism Council.³³ Jobs supported by the industry increased, with visitor exports making up 9.6% of total exports.³⁴ The number of international arrivals is expected to top 1.5 million in 2019.³⁵ Moving ahead, the government is looking to attract investors across 10 key tourism sites, as well as running communication campaigns to showcase the tourism activities on offer.³⁶

Thanks to a more open visa policy in operation at global level, as well as at continental level, Senegal ranks in the top 20 least restrictive destinations in Africa, having improved visa procedures for 100 countries between 2008–2018, according to the UNWTO.

Ghana



- Ghana moved up the top 10 countries in the Index
- **2019 Index ranking:** no.5 (up from no.7 in 2018, no.6 in 2017, and no.22 in 2016).
- **2019 Liberal access** (visa-free or visa on arrival to Africans): 98% (also 98% in 2018 and 2017, and 39% in 2016).

Ghana rose back into the top five countries in the *Africa Visa Openness Index* in 2019.

Following the government's publicized commitment to allow Africans liberal access to the country in 2016, Ghana continues to champion regional integration efforts. In May 2018, the country ratified the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), having also signed up to the Single African Air Transport Market and the Free Movement of Persons Protocol. Ghana was also selected to host the Secretariat for the African Continental Free Trade Area in 2019.

"We have, today, taken very important steps towards working with a common voice and a common purpose to exploit the abundant wealth and resources of our great continent for the benefit of all our peoples. Indeed, the 'Africa We Want' is achievable."

Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo

President of Ghana,
12th AU Extraordinary Summit³⁷

Together with its liberal visa policy, Ghana is taking steps to promote trade, investment and tourism, making improvements to visa procedures for 176 countries between 2008–2018, according to the UNWTO.³⁸ At the same time, in line with the developments of the AfCFTA, the country's World Bank Group's *Doing Business Index* score rose in 2019, with reforms making it easier to trade across borders, as well as dealing with construction permits.³⁹



Countries that most improved, 2016-2019

Angola



■ **2019 Index ranking:** no.34 (no.42 in 2018, no.52 in 2017 and no.49 in 2016).

Angola moved up the *Africa Visa Openness Index* 15 places since 2016, multiplying its score by eight by offering greater liberal access to more Africans. In 2018, the government announced a decision to allow 61 countries to be granted visas on arrival, including 13 African countries.⁴⁰

Alongside the introduction of eVisas, accessed at www.smevisa.gov.ao/, the visa process is being simplified with the removal of an invitation letter as part of the documents required. The move is part of wider government plans to boost economic development and drive the tourism sector, with the aim of creating one million jobs nationwide in the sector by 2020.⁴¹

Benin



■ **2019 Index ranking:** no.1 (no.1 in 2018, no.27 in 2017 and no.31 in 2016).

Benin rose to joint top place in the *Africa Visa Openness Index*, having moved 30 up places since 2016 and increasing its score by 200%. In 2017, the government set out a new visa-free access policy for all Africans, a move widely welcomed by institutions and media Africa-wide.

The government's 'Smart Gouv' programme has been rolled out to simplify entry and short stay visa processes, including the introduction of eVisas accessed at <https://evisa.gouv.bj>. As a result of its open visa policy, Benin ranked in the least restrictive destinations worldwide, according to the UNWTO, making improvements for 170 countries between 2008-2018.⁴²

Gabon



■ **2019 Index ranking:** no.42 (no.41 in 2018, no.48 in 2017 and no.50 in 2016).

Gabon moved up eight places in the *Africa Visa Openness Index* since 2016, multiplying its score by five. The country now allows more citizens of other African countries to visit without a visa.

Gabon is one of two African countries that improved visa procedures the most between 2008-2018, for a record 194 countries, according to the UNWTO.⁴³ An eVisa platform, online at <https://evisa.dgdi.ga/#/>, is helping to facilitate entry to the country. Supporting Africa's integration efforts, Gabon has ratified the African Continental Free Trade Area, and signed both the Single African Air Transport Market and the Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons.

Tunisia



■ **2019 Index ranking:** no.27 (no.24 in 2018, no.23 in 2017 and no.36 in 2016).

Tunisia increased its ranking by nine places on the *Africa Visa Openness Index* since 2016, thanks to the removal of visas for a number of African countries.

Following government efforts to revitalize the high-value tourism sector through a number of reforms, Tunisia is modernizing the visa process to improve access with a new eVisa platform at www.visatunisia.com/. The country is also ranked as one of the least restrictive destinations in Africa for international visitors, according to the UNWTO.⁴⁴ At the same time, due to national efforts to boost economic growth and development, Tunisia moved up in the World Bank Group's *Doing Business Index*.⁴⁵



São Tomé and Príncipe



■ **2019 Index ranking:** no.43 (no.42 in 2018, no.36 in 2017 and no.52 in 2016).

São Tomé and Príncipe rose nine places in the *Africa Visa Openness Index* since 2016. A number of African countries can now visit São Tomé and Príncipe visa-free.

To promote travel, the country launched an eVisa platform for international visitors at <http://www.smf.st/evisa/index.php>.

São Tomé and Príncipe ranks in the least restrictive destinations in Africa for global travellers according to the UNWTO, and is one of two African countries that made the highest number of improvements on visa processes for 194 countries between 2008-2018.⁴⁶ In line with wider integration goals, São Tomé and Príncipe has ratified the African Continental Free Trade Area and signed the the Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons.

Countries looking to open up on visas

Botswana



■ **2019 Index ranking:** no.31 (no.30 in 2018, no.27 in 2017 and no.28 in 2016).

"In an effort to improve the ease of doing business in Botswana, Botswana will offer TOURIST VISA at point of entry effective 24th November 2018. This announcement was made by HE, The President of Botswana, Dr Mokgweetsi Masisi at the HLCC meeting held today (5-Nov-2018)."

Business Botswana, @BusinesssBotsPR 15 Nov 2018⁴⁷

In a bid to promote the tourism sector and boost the business environment, Botswana's government announced a move to liberalize its visa regime by offering tourist visas on arrival. The new visa-on-arrival policy will make travel to Botswana easier for African travellers. Botswana's business community welcomed the decision, sharing the news on social media.

Namibia



■ **2019 Index ranking:** no.40 (no.38 in 2018, no.36 in 2017 and no.38 in 2016).

*"Namibia has decided to start issuing visas on arrival to a good number of African, Asian, European, North American and South American countries."⁴⁸ We believe this move will bring us closer to the dream of uniting Africans as envisaged by our forebear era. We also believe that tourism will benefit."*⁴⁹

Stanley Simataa

Minister of Information and Communication Technology
Namibia

In June 2019, Namibia announced a decision to start issuing visas on arrival to travellers from a number of African countries outside of the SADC region to promote free movement of people in line with the African Union's integration goals. The pilot project, which also aims to boost the tourism sector, will include global travellers and will issue visas on arrival for a fee of N\$1000 at Hosea Kutako International Airport, with future plans to cover other border posts. Africans from 27 countries across the continent will benefit from the move.

Global context for visa openness

Migration and the movement of people across borders remained high on the agenda in 2019, profiled widely in headlines across Europe, North America, and regions worldwide.

Throughout 2019, which was marked as the African Union's *Year of Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons*, there have been ongoing efforts to promote a human-centred approach for durable solutions to challenges, including the refugee crisis in the Mediterranean. This involved initiatives under the Joint Valletta Action Plan, as senior officials from Europe and Africa met in Addis Ababa on 14-15 November 2018.⁵⁰ During 2019, to drive progress on the Plan's five priority domains, technical discussions and high-level political conferences were held as part of the Rabat Process⁵¹ and the Khartoum Process.⁵²

The steps taken on Africa's integration milestones in 2019, including to open up borders, made international headlines and are helping to show how economic, political and social connectivity can help to meet complex global challenges from inequality to climate change.

Tackling inequality within and among countries at a global level continues to be a pressing challenge, as outlined in the UN's 2019 *Multidimensional Poverty Index*.⁵³ The Bank's *African Economic Outlook 2019* underscores the need to drive equality outcomes across regions and within countries on the continent. Easing travel restrictions for African travellers will help to open up greater economic opportunities, including for SMEs, women and youth.

An integrated Africa, where citizens are able to travel freely thanks to visa openness, will support Africa's dynamic tourism sector and generate more jobs. At the same time, African travellers are tapping into the continent's unique travel experiences, as global consumer trends show preferences for adventure tourism.⁵⁴ The rise of eco-tourism sites across Africa is also supporting more communities to sustainably manage their environmental resources.

Visa openness solutions in 2019+

Visa on arrival for Africans

Visa-free regional blocs

Regional bloc visas

Multi-year visas after assessing applicant

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

Opening up on visas unilaterally

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

Improving access to information:
online and in different languages

Travel Document Solutions

Regional travel using regional passports or national identity cards

African passport for business people
(issued by competent authority to strict criteria)

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



Forward look

“There's excitement in the air on Africa's economic opportunities. And those opportunities are boundless. The newly minted African Continental Free Trade Area will make Africa the largest free trade zone in the world, with a combined GDP of over USD 3.3 trillion. Pulling down tariff barriers alone, will spur trade by at least 53%, and with the elimination of non-tariff barriers, trade could potentially double.”

Akinwumi A. Adesina

President,

African Development Bank Group⁵⁵

How fast the journey will be to reach a united, open Africa depends on decision-makers, policymakers, businesses, investors, travellers as well as all citizens on the continent.

The data on visa openness in Africa shows that the continent is steadfastly on track, as strong progress is made for the fourth year in a row. Many more Africans can travel more easily and freely to a wider number of countries from across all regions than ever before. But, the pace can and should be stepped up. Trading is due to start under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) in July 2020, and as goods move, business people and investors need to move. Bold changes to the way in which Africa can do business call for fresh visa solutions, such as offering visas on arrival, visa-free regional blocs, regional bloc visas, positive reciprocity arrangements and unilaterally opening up on visas.

African countries at the forefront of visa openness include many of those that are championing Africa's landmark integration efforts, having ratified the AfCFTA and signed the SAATM and the Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons. They have put in place a number of visa openness options by providing liberal access to both African and global travellers, issuing more visas on arrival rather than visas before travel, and setting up eVisa platforms. In turn, the top performing countries on visa openness in Africa are among the top countries for foreign direct investment on the continent and are seeing growth in the tourism sector.

Moving ahead, more countries Africa-wide need to build a closer cooperation and adopt the technology and digital systems that are allowing Africans to move freely on the continent.

Africa Visa Openness Index fifth edition

The fifth edition of the Index will take a closer look at the practical experiences of African travellers when it comes to crossing borders on the continent. From the different processes, documents, fees and time involved to the electronic platforms, more accessible information and reduction in costs and processes that are lowering the administrative burden of travel.

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

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





Country	VISA OPENNESS INDICATORS (by number of African countries)			Score	Rank
	No visa required	Visa on arrival	Visa required*		
Seychelles	53	0	0	1.000	1
Benin	53	0	0	1.000	1
Senegal	22	31	0	0.883	3
Rwanda	17	36	0	0.864	4
Ghana	18	34	1	0.853	5
Uganda	18	34	1	0.853	5
Guinea Bissau	14	39	0	0.853	5
Cabo Verde	16	36	1	0.845	8
Togo	14	38	1	0.838	9
Mauritania	9	44	0	0.834	10
Mozambique	9	44	0	0.834	10
Mauritius	27	21	5	0.826	12
Kenya	18	32	3	0.823	13
Comoros	0	53	0	0.800	14
Madagascar	0	53	0	0.800	14
Somalia	0	53	0	0.800	14
Djibouti	0	52	1	0.785	17
Ethiopia	2	49	2	0.777	18
Tanzania	16	25	12	0.679	19
Gambia	28	0	25	0.528	20
Zimbabwe	17	10	26	0.472	21
Burkina Faso	16	11	26	0.468	22
Malawi	15	11	27	0.449	23
Zambia	14	11	28	0.430	24
Guinea	22	0	31	0.415	25
Mali	20	2	31	0.408	26
Côte d'Ivoire	21	0	32	0.396	27
Tunisia	21	0	32	0.396	27
Niger	18	0	35	0.340	29
Nigeria	17	1	35	0.336	30
Botswana	17	0	36	0.321	31
Eswatini	17	0	36	0.321	31
Sierra Leone	15	2	36	0.313	33
Angola	10	7	36	0.294	34
Lesotho	15	0	38	0.283	35
South Africa	15	0	38	0.283	35
CAR	14	0	39	0.264	37
Liberia	14	0	39	0.264	37
Chad	13	1	39	0.260	39
Namibia	13	0	40	0.245	40
Congo Republic	5	8	40	0.215	41
Gabon	9	0	44	0.170	42
São Tomé and Príncipe	8	0	45	0.151	43
Cameroon	7	0	46	0.132	44
DRC	4	3	46	0.121	45
Algeria	6	0	47	0.113	46
Burundi	6	0	47	0.113	46
Morocco	6	0	47	0.113	46
Egypt	0	5	48	0.075	49
South Sudan	0	5	48	0.075	49
Eritrea	1	2	50	0.049	51
Sudan	0	2	51	0.030	52
Libya	1	0	52	0.019	53
Equatorial Guinea	0	0	53	0.000	54
Western Sahara	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Scores range from 0 to 1 (highest)

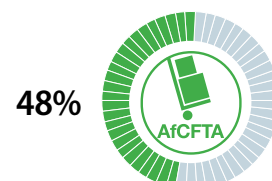
* Visa required means a visa has to be obtained before departure and is not an eVisa.

Source: IATA (June-July 2019)

Annex 2. Visa openness in Africa: latest developments and initiatives

Country	Visa openness rank, 2019	Top 20 2019	eVisa available	Ratified AfCFTA	Agreed to join the SAATM	Signed the PFMP
						
Seychelles	1	●				
Benin	1	●	●		●	
Senegal	3	●		●		●
Rwanda	4	●	●	●	●	●
Ghana	5	●		●	●	●
Uganda	5	●	●	●		●
Guinea-Bissau	5	●	●			
Cabo Verde	8	●			●	
Togo	9	●		●	●	●
Mauritania	10	●		●		
Mozambique	10	●			●	●
Mauritius	12	●				
Kenya	13	●	●	●	●	●
Comoros	14	●				●
Madagascar	14	●	●			
Somalia	14	●				●
Djibouti	17	●	●	●		●
Ethiopia	18	●	●	●	●	
Tanzania	19	●	●			●
Gambia	20	●		●	●	●
Zimbabwe	21		●	●	●	●
Burkina Faso	22			●	●	●
Malawi	23					●
Zambia	24		●			
Guinea	25			●	●	●
Mali	26			●	●	●
Côte d'Ivoire	27		●	●	●	●
Tunisia	27		●			
Niger	29			●	●	●
Nigeria	30		●		●	
Botswana	31				●	
Eswatini	31			●	●	
Sierra Leone	33		●	●	●	●
Angola	34		●			●
Lesotho	35		●			●
South Africa	35			●	●	
CAR	37				●	●
Liberia	37				●	●
Chad	39			●	●	●
Namibia	40			●		
Congo Republic	41			●	●	●
Gabon	42		●	●	●	●
São Tomé and Príncipe	43		●	●		●
Cameroon	44		●		●	
DRC	45					●
Algeria	46					
Burundi	46					
Morocco	46					
Egypt	49		●	●	●	
South Sudan	49					●
Eritrea	51					
Sudan	52					●
Libya	53					
Equatorial Guinea	54			●		●
Western Sahara	N/A			●		

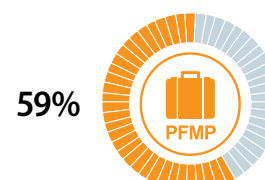
Of 54 African countries:



26 countries have ratified the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).



28 countries have agreed to join the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM).



32 countries have signed the Protocol on Free Movement of Persons (PFMP).

Notes

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9. <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20181231/new-years-message-chairperson-african-union-commission-moussa-faki-mahamat>
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African Development Bank

Immeuble CCIA

Rue Jean-Paul II, Plateau

01 B.P. 1387

Abidjan 01, Côte d'Ivoire

Telephone: (225) 20 26 26 54

www.afdb.org



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