



GLOBAL IMMIGRATION TRENDS – March 2025

Introduction

This global migration summary outlines the latest updates and trends in immigration policies, emphasizing changes across different regions across the world and their implications for Nigerians seeking immigrant or non-immigrant visas.

Europe

United Kingdom

UNITED KINGDOM CONSERVATIVE PARTY PROPOSES TOUGHER IMMIGRATION RULES TO LIMIT PERMANENT SETTLEMENT

The United Kingdom's ("UK") Conservative Party, under the leadership of Kemi Badenoch, has proposed major changes to the country's immigration policies, tightening the rules for those seeking permanent residency and citizenship. Badenoch's plan includes doubling the required residency period for migrants before they can apply for indefinite leave to remain, introducing stricter economic conditions, and permanently barring those with criminal records or immigration violations from obtaining British citizenship.

One of the most significant changes in the proposal is the increase in the minimum residency period required to apply for indefinite leave to remain ("ILR"). Currently, migrants can apply for ILR after five (5) years of legal residence in the UK. Under the new rules, this period will be extended to ten (10) years. In addition, applicants will now need to meet tougher economic conditions. Badenoch stated that only those who are "net contributors" to the economy, meaning they earn a high enough salary and do not rely on public benefits, will be eligible.

The time required to apply for British citizenship after obtaining ILR will also increase. Currently, migrants must wait twelve (12) months after receiving ILR before applying for a UK passport. This period will now be extended to five (5) years, meaning it will take a minimum of fifteen (15) years before a migrant can start a citizenship application.

Badenoch's proposal also introduces new restrictions on who can qualify for permanent residency:

- **Ban on Benefits & Social Housing:** Migrants who have claimed welfare benefits or used social housing at any point during their stay will be disqualified from applying for ILR.
- **Criminal Record Disqualification:** Anyone with a criminal record will be permanently banned from applying for ILR or British citizenship.
- **Illegal Immigration Ban:** Those who entered the UK illegally or overstayed their visas will be permanently barred from obtaining permanent residency or a British passport.

What This Means for Migrants

If these changes are implemented, migrants currently in the UK or planning to move there will face:

- A significantly longer wait time (ten (10) years instead of five (5) years) before applying for ILR.
- Stricter financial requirements, making it harder for lower-income workers and families to qualify for permanent residency.
- A total wait time of fifteen (15) years before they can apply for British citizenship.
- A permanent ban for those with criminal records or immigration violations.

Finland

FINLAND OPENS 2025 SEASONAL WORK PERMIT APPLICATIONS

The Finnish Immigration Service has announced the opening of applications for the 2025 Finland Seasonal Work Permit, providing foreign nationals, including Nigerians, the opportunity to work in Finland's agriculture, forestry, and tourism sectors. This initiative aims to address the country's labor shortages while offering workers a chance to gain international work experience.

The Finland Seasonal Work Permit is a temporary residence permit that allows foreign workers to engage in specific types of seasonal employment. This includes jobs in agriculture, gardening, forestry, wild berry picking, and tourism. The permit is granted for a maximum period of nine (9) months within a twelve (12) month period, ensuring that seasonal work remains temporary and does not lead to permanent residency.

Eligibility and Key Requirements

To qualify for the seasonal work permit, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- The work must fall under Finland's officially recognized seasonal job categories.
- The job must be tied to a particular season and not be a permanent role.
- Applicants must apply for the permit from abroad unless they hold a valid seasonal work certificate or visa.
- The permit duration cannot exceed nine (9) months within any twelve (12) month period.

If an applicant is coming to Finland for seasonal work lasting no more than ninety (90) days and is from a visa-exempt country, they must apply for a certificate for seasonal work instead of a residence permit. However, those requiring a visa must apply for a seasonal work visa through a Finnish embassy or consulate.

Types of Seasonal Work Permits

Finland provides different types of authorizations for seasonal workers, depending on the length of employment:

- **Residence Permit for Seasonal Work:** Required for individuals whose employment will last for up to nine months.
- **Certificate for Seasonal Work:** For those working a seasonal job for no more than 90 days and who do not require a visa.
- **Visa for Seasonal Work:** Needed by those coming from countries that require a visa for entry into Finland and whose work duration does not exceed ninety (90) days.

For those continuing their seasonal work after their initial permit expires, an extended residence permit for seasonal work must be obtained. However, this is only possible if the worker already holds a valid seasonal work permit and is applying for an extension to continue employment immediately after the previous permit expires.

Finland's seasonal work program offers foreign workers the opportunity to earn income while experiencing life in a country known for its high standard of living, excellent work conditions, and strong labor protections. The program also provides Finnish employers with much-needed labor during peak seasons, particularly in agriculture and tourism.





With the 2025 seasonal work permit applications now open, prospective workers should take advantage of this opportunity by preparing their applications early and ensuring they meet all eligibility criteria.

Find more:

<https://enterfinland.fi/eServices/info/seasonalworkpermittypeselection>

North America

United States of America

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TIGHTENS INTERVIEW WAIVER/DROPBOX RULES: DROPBOX ELIGIBILITY NOW TWELVE (12) MONTHS

On February 18, 2025, the United States ("US") Department of State updated its visa interview waiver policy, reducing the eligibility window for renewals from forty-eight (48) months to twelve (12) months. Effective immediately, only applicants renewing a visa in the same non-immigrant category that expired within the past year qualify for the dropbox process. This marks a return to pre-COVID eligibility standards.

The drop box, which allows eligible applicants to renew visas without an interview, was introduced to streamline the process and reduce wait times.

The revision means that more applicants will now be required to attend in-person visa interviews at US embassies and consulates, potentially leading to longer wait times for appointments. While consular officers retain the discretion to waive interviews for certain diplomatic and official visa applicants, others will need to schedule face-to-face interviews as part of their renewal process.

With these changes in effect, travelers renewing US visas are encouraged to plan ahead, as increased demand for in-person interviews may lead to extended processing times.

COMPLETE REMOVAL OF DROPBOX FOR NIGERIAN VISA APPLICANTS

Nigerian applicants renewing their U.S. visas will now be required to attend in-person interviews, as the dropbox processing option has been entirely removed from the appointment booking system.

Previously, the dropbox program, also known as the Interview Waiver allowed eligible Nigerians to renew their visas without an interview, provided they met specific criteria, including holding a multiple-entry visa issued in Nigeria, applying for the same visa classification, and having a prior U.S. visa that expired within the last twenty-four (24) months. In August 2020, this eligibility window was expanded to forty-eight (48) months to reduce in-person interactions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

With the program's removal, all Nigerian visa renewal applicants, regardless of their renewal history, must now undergo full in-person interviews, a change that is expected to increase processing times and lead to potential delays. This policy shift will particularly impact business travelers, students, and frequent visitors who previously relied on the dropbox for faster renewals.

While the reasons for this discontinuation remain unclear, the move signals a return to stricter visa renewal procedures for Nigerians. Without alternative options, securing U.S. visa appointments is expected to become even more challenging, potentially disrupting travel plans for many.

USCIS IMPLEMENTS IMMEDIATE CHANGES TO KEY IMMIGRATION FORMS

On March 3, 2025, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services ("USCIS") released a new version of Form I-485 (Application to Register Permanent Residence or Adjust Status), a crucial form in the U.S. immigration system. Effective immediately, the previous version of Form I-485 is no longer valid, and all applicants must use the updated form.

As a result of this implementation, pending applications that were filed using the old form but have not yet been adjudicated will be rejected. Affected applicants may have to wait for an official rejection notice before resubmitting their applications using the new version and all new applications must be filed using the updated form.

For applicants who intend to file Form I-485, these changes will impact the application process in several key ways:

1. **Medical Examination Timing** – Applicants must complete your medical examination before filing Form I-485, rather than submitting it later in the process.
2. **Documentation Requirements** – Ensure that all required medical records and vaccination documentation are included with your application.
3. **Affidavit of Support** – If you qualify for an exemption, you no longer need to file Form I-864W separately, as the updated form has consolidated certain requirements to streamline the process.

These changes mark a significant shift in the adjustment of status application process, reinforcing the importance of ensuring compliance with USCIS's updated requirements to avoid delays or rejections.

Canada

CANADA STRENGTHENS BORDER SECURITY WITH NEW TEMPORARY RESIDENT DOCUMENT CANCELLATION RULES

The Canadian government has implemented new regulations granting immigration and border services officers expanded authority to cancel temporary resident documents. These changes, which came into effect on January 31, 2025, through amendments to the Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations, are aimed at tightening border security and ensuring compliance with Canada's immigration laws. The amendments have been published in the Canada Gazette II.

The revised regulations give officers explicit authority to cancel electronic travel authorizations (eTAs) and temporary resident visas (TRVs) on a case-by-case basis. Under these changes, documents may be canceled if:

- A person's status or circumstances change, making them inadmissible or ineligible (e.g., due to providing false information, having a criminal history, or in cases of death).
- An officer is not satisfied that the person will leave Canada by the end of their authorized stay.
- The document is lost, stolen, destroyed, or abandoned.

Additionally, officers now have the power to cancel work permits and study permits if:

- The holder becomes a permanent resident of Canada.
- The individual is deceased.
- The document was issued due to an administrative error.

These measures are expected to result in approximately seven thousand (7,000) additional cancellations of temporary resident visas, work permits, and study permits annually.

Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada ("IRCC") has emphasized that these changes are part of an ongoing effort to strengthen the integrity of Canada's temporary residence programs. The IRCC has also assured that in cases of cancellation, foreign nationals will be informed as quickly as possible through their IRCC account or email. This notification will include the reason for cancellation and potential next steps, where applicable.

The rule changes will affect individuals applying for or holding temporary resident status, including visitors, workers, and students. Foreign nationals in Canada may now face document cancellation if they fail to meet the conditions of their stay. This includes students who are refused a study or work permit after applying for one.

Find more:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/notices/new-rules-strengthen-temporary-resident-document-cancellations-border-security-integrity.html>

Asia

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA RESTRICTS MULTIPLE-ENTRY FOR NIGERIANS AND THIRTEEN (13) OTHER COUNTRIES

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia ("KSA") has introduced a new visa policy limiting travelers from Nigeria and thirteen (13) other countries to single-entry visas.





The affected nations include Algeria, Bangladesh, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, Pakistan, Sudan, Tunisia, and Yemen. This change, which took effect in February 2025, eliminates the one (1) year multiple-entry visa option for tourism, business, and family visits. While this decision does not impact Hajj, Umrah, diplomatic, or residency visas, it significantly affects frequent travelers from these countries.

The KSA government cited concerns over unauthorized Hajj participation and visa misuse as reasons for the restriction. Many travelers reportedly used long-term visas to stay beyond permitted durations or to join the pilgrimage without proper authorization, contributing to overcrowding and safety risks. The issue became particularly alarming in 2024 when over one thousand, two hundred (1,200) pilgrims lost their lives due to extreme heat and congestion. By enforcing stricter visa rules, Saudi authorities aim to regulate Hajj attendance and improve crowd management.

Under the new policy, affected travelers will receive single-entry visas valid for thirty (30) days with no extension options. While Saudi officials describe this measure as temporary, they have not provided a clear timeline for revisiting the decision. Travelers from the affected nations are advised to apply for their visas well in advance to avoid disruptions.

Thailand

THAILAND UPDATES LONG-TERM RESIDENT VISA RULES

Thailand has introduced significant updates to its Long-Term Resident (“LTR”) Visa program, making it easier for high-net-worth individuals, skilled professionals, and remote workers to establish a long-term presence in the country. These changes have been approved by the Thai Cabinet and implemented by the Board of Investment.

Key Changes to the LTR Visa Criteria

1 Removal of Income Requirements for Wealthy Global Citizens

Previously, applicants in this category needed to show an annual income of at least United States Dollars (US\$80,000.00) for two consecutive years. Under the new criteria, this requirement has been removed, with the focus shifting to long-term investment in Thailand. Applicants must now invest a minimum of Five Hundred Thousand United States Dollars (US\$500,000.00) in Thailand and hold at least One Million United States Dollars (US\$1,000,000.00) in worldwide assets.

2. Eased Work Experience and Industry Requirements for Highly-Skilled Professionals

Previously, professionals had to prove work experience in target industries. The new criteria eliminate this requirement while expanding the list of eligible industries. Professors in higher education and vocational institutions across all fields are now also eligible for the LTR Visa.

3. Relaxed Work Criteria for Remote Workers (Work-from-Thailand Professionals)

Changes to this category include the removal of the five-year work experience requirement. Additionally, the revenue threshold for eligible overseas employers has been lowered from One Hundred and Fifty Million United States Dollars (US\$150,000,000.00) to Fifty Million United States Dollars (US\$50,000,000.00) over the past three (3) years. The updated criteria also allow wholly owned subsidiaries of larger corporations to qualify under the parent company’s revenue.

4. Expanded Dependent Rights

Previously, only spouses and children under twenty (20) were recognized as dependents, with a cap of four (4) dependents per visa holder. The new policy broadens eligibility to include parents and all legal dependents, with no limit on the number of dependents.

5. Wealthy Pensioners Category Remains Unchanged

Individuals over fifty (50) years old can still qualify with an annual passive income of Eighty Thousand United States Dollars (US\$80,000.00) or

a reduced requirement of Forty Thousand United States Dollars (US\$40,000.00) plus an investment of Two Hundred and Fifty Thousand United States Dollars (US\$250,000.00) in Thailand.

The global workforce is becoming increasingly mobile, and Thailand seeks to position itself as a premier destination for high-value foreign residents. The updated LTR Visa rules make it easier for foreigners to live and work in Thailand by removing strict income and experience requirements. With better flexibility and fewer barriers, Thailand intends to attract more global talent and investment, keeping pace with shifting economic and geopolitical trends.

Find more:

<https://www.thaigov.go.th/news/contents/details/92378>

South Korea

SOUTH KOREA ADOPTS E-ARRIVAL CARD FOR INTERNATIONAL TRAVELERS

As of February 24, 2025, South Korea has officially introduced the **e-Arrival Card system**, an online submission system to replace the traditional paper arrival forms and streamline entry procedures for international travelers. The e-Arrival Card will allow travelers to input essential information such as travel dates, flight details, and accommodation online before arrival. By digitizing the entry process, South Korea joins countries like Thailand, Malaysia, and Cambodia, which have already introduced similar digital entry systems.

To complete the process, travelers must visit e-arrivalcard.go.kr within three (3) days of their scheduled arrival. They will need to upload a copy of their passport, enter travel details, and submit the required declaration. Upon successful submission, travelers will receive a confirmation email and can download the e-Arrival Card as a PDF or take a screenshot to present at immigration. The e-Arrival Card service is free of charge.

To ensure a smooth transition, the Korean Immigration Service has announced that both paper and electronic arrival cards will be accepted until December 2025. However, from January 2026, only the digital submission will be valid for entry into South Korea. Some travelers, including airline crew members, holders of a valid Korea Electronic Travel Authorization, and registered residents of South Korea, will be exempt from this requirement.

Find more:

https://www.immigration.go.kr/immigration_eng/1832/subview.do?enc=Zm5jdDF8QE8JTJGyMjZJTJGw1taWdyYXRpb25fZW5nJTJGMjI5JTJGNTkyMDQzJTJGYXJ0Y2xWaWV3LmRvJTNG

Africa

Nigeria

NIGERIA TO END VISA-ON-ARRIVAL POLICY BY APRIL 2025

The Federal Government of Nigeria has announced plans to discontinue the current Nigeria’s visa-on-arrival system by April 2025. According to the **Minister of Interior, Dr. Olunmi Tunji-Ojo**, the existing system allows entry without adequate pre-screening, making it unsustainable from a national security perspective.

The Visa on Arrival policy, which was initially introduced to facilitate tourism and investment, will be replaced by a stricter pre-arrival screening system that includes background checks through Interpol, criminal record systems, and other security databases.

The Minister of Interior, Dr Olunmi Tunji-Ojo, while speaking at the graduation ceremony of Nigeria Immigration Service officers, emphasized the importance of a **data-driven visa system** that prioritizes security over convenience.

Under the reform, prospective visitors will be required to obtain approval before traveling to Nigeria, ensuring they have been vetted through international security databases. Landing and exit cards will also be introduced to improve documentation and track the movement of visitors. The Minister also revealed plans to implement an Advance Passenger Information system at land borders to track movement more effectively.





The visa-on-arrival policy, introduced in 2020 to boost tourism and investment, allowed eligible travelers to obtain visas upon entry. However, security experts have long warned of its vulnerabilities, particularly the challenge of vetting visitors at the point of arrival. The new reforms aim to close these gaps by ensuring that every traveler is screened before departure to Nigeria.

While the full scope of these reforms remains unclear, it is uncertain whether the visa-on-arrival system will be completely phased out or if enhanced security measures will be introduced to address its vulnerabilities. Further details are expected before the policy takes effect.

The Republic of Niger

THE REPUBLIC OF NIGER RESTRICTS ENTRY FOR NIGERIANS USING ECOWAS PASSPORT

Niger Republic has begun enforcing restrictions on Nigerians traveling with the Economic Community of West African States ("ECOWAS") passport, now requiring a valid international passport for entry. This policy change follows Niger's recent withdrawal from ECOWAS, alongside Mali and Burkina Faso. While the land border between Nigeria and Niger remains open, stricter immigration controls have been implemented at key crossings, such as Illela (Nigeria) and Konni (Niger).

Reports indicate that Nigerien authorities no longer recognize the ECOWAS Travel Certificate (ETC) or ECOWAS passport for entry. Travelers have also alleged that security officials in Niger are exploiting the situation by demanding bribes. According to a driver operating on the Illela-Konni route, border officials request payments ranging from Five Thousand West African CFA Franc (XOF5,000.00) to Ten Thousand West African CFA Franc (XOF10,000.00) (approximately Eight United States Dollars (\$8) to Sixteen United States Dollars (\$16) before allowing travelers with ECOWAS passports to pass. Those unable to produce Niger's new identification document reportedly face harassment or are pressured into paying a bribe.

Despite these restrictions, some traders claim that business activities at the border continue largely unaffected. However, cross-border commuters and traders who previously relied on the ECOWAS passport for seamless travel are now facing challenges. A frequent trader expressed concerns about a potential abolition of the ECOWAS passport, stating that Nigerian travelers are increasingly being turned back at the border.

Australia

AUSTRALIA UPDATES SECOND WORKING HOLIDAY VISA RULES

Australia has introduced some updates to its Second Working Holiday Visa (Subclass 417), making it easier for eligible travelers to extend their stay while also tightening certain requirements. The changes, effective February 2025, allow young travelers to remain in Australia for an additional twelve (12) months but introduces new rules that could impact applications and work rights.

What is Changing?

1. Automatic Visa Cancellation for Certain Applications: If a holder of a Working Holiday Visa applies for another visa, such as an eVisitor (Subclass 651) or a Transit Visa (Subclass 771), their current visa will automatically end. This would result in the loss of work rights and could disqualify them from obtaining another Working Holiday Visa in the future.
2. Location Declaration Requirement: Applicants must now accurately declare their location at the time of application. Providing incorrect location details could lead to visa refusal.
3. Longer Processing Times Expected: Due to a high volume of applications, the Australian government has warned that visa processing may take longer than usual.

Australia's updated Second Working Holiday Visa provides an opportunity for young travelers to extend their stay, but it also comes with stricter conditions. With the risk of automatic visa cancellations, mandatory location declarations, and processing delays, applicants must be careful to meet all requirements.

Conclusion

It is evident from the global immigration trends that several nations are revising their immigration policies to attract skilled workers, address labor shortages, and streamline application processes. These changes reflect the growing demand for talent in critical sectors and are expected to shape the global migration landscape significantly.

We encourage applicants seeking opportunities abroad to be cognizant of these changes as they are dynamic and seek professional guidance when necessary.

This alert is for general information only. It is not offered as advice on any particular matter, whether legal, procedural or otherwise.

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For additional information, please contact Bloomfield LP Email- immigration@bloomfield-law.com or your usual contact at Bloomfield LP.

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