



Global Immigration Trends and Highlights

July to September 2026



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Overview

Welcome to the quarterly overview of global corporate immigration developments from Ernst & Young (EY). This publication provides a snapshot of significant immigration policy changes and developments from across EY's global network during the past quarter, helping organizations stay informed of trends that may impact workforce mobility and immigration programs.

Policy changes are proposed and implemented around the world every day. Accordingly, this publication is updated quarterly and does not reflect every jurisdiction or development. The articles linked herein were accurate as of their publication dates and have not been subsequently updated.

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For the latest immigration updates, see [here](#). For further guidance or information regarding immigration policies and/or requirements in specific jurisdictions, contact the EY professional with whom you work.

At a glance



Shawn Orme
EY Global Immigration
Markets Leader
[EY People Profile](#)

The third quarter of 2026 reflects a continued evolution toward more structured and strategic immigration systems worldwide. Governments are increasingly using immigration policy to advance broader economic, workforce and national priorities, resulting in greater scrutiny of eligibility, expanded compliance expectations and more targeted pathways for talent. Across regions, immigration is becoming less of a standalone administrative function and more closely integrated with labor market, investment and competitiveness objectives.

At the same time, technology is reshaping how governments manage cross-border mobility. Digital filing platforms, electronic travel authorization systems and online identity verification tools continue to expand, reflecting a broader shift toward data-driven immigration administration. While these developments can improve efficiency and accessibility, they also provide governments with greater visibility into immigration activity and reinforce the growing role of technology in policy implementation and enforcement.

The quarter also highlights an increasingly differentiated approach to talent mobility. While some jurisdictions are expanding opportunities for highly skilled professionals, investors and business leaders, others are introducing localization measures, refining eligibility requirements or strengthening workforce protections. This divergence reflects the unique economic and demographic priorities shaping national immigration agendas and underscores the increasingly strategic role immigration plays in supporting growth, competitiveness and workforce development around the world.

For information about jurisdictions offering visas and permits for remote workers, explore the latest 2026 edition of the [EY Digital Nomad and Remote Work Guide](#). For broader business insights, see the [July 2026 Geostrategic Analysis](#) for updates on global trade shifts, labor market dynamics, and AI governance trends; and the EY-Parthenon 2026 [Geostrategic Outlook](#) for analysis.



Americas

Employer obligations and benefits

- In [Canada](#), Ontario has released detailed eligibility and ranking criteria for the new Ontario Immigrant Nominee Program (OINP) Workforce Priority stream, including employer registration requirements, occupation-specific eligibility rules and a points-based Expression of Interest (EOI) system. The new framework places greater emphasis on factors, such as wages, location, language ability, education and work experience, requiring employers and candidates to prepare significant supporting documentation once the stream launches.
- The [United States](#) Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has updated its policy to allow officers to deny certain immigration applications without first requesting additional information if required evidence is missing or eligibility is not clearly established, increasing the importance of submitting complete and well-supported filings from the outset.
- The [United States](#) Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has proposed a new fee of \$103,265 for cap-subject H-1B petitions, including those eligible for the advanced degree exemption. If implemented, the fee would significantly increase the cost of sponsoring H-1B workers selected in the annual lottery and could impact employers' hiring strategies for future cap seasons.
- The [United States](#) has issued two new H-1B directives, extending existing entry restrictions and increasing scrutiny of employers with recent or planned layoffs. The measures could result in additional review requirements and processing delays for H-1B cases.

Individual obligations and benefits

- [Brazil](#) has introduced electronic issuance of temporary visas for foreign nationals who are exempt from Brazil's visitor visa requirement but are relocating to the country for work, study, family reunification and other residence-based purposes. Visitor travel for tourism and short-term business is unaffected.
- In the [United States](#), the state of Texas proposed limiting the documents nonimmigrants may use to verify identity when applying for or renewing a driver's license or state ID. If implemented, some lawfully present nonimmigrants could face additional scrutiny or challenges after their visa stamp expires, even if they continue to maintain valid nonimmigrant status.
- The [United States](#) Department of Homeland Security (DHS) published a final rule replacing the longstanding "duration of status" admission framework for F-1 students, J-1 exchange visitors, and I representatives of foreign media, and their dependents, with fixed periods of admission that carry a set expiration date. It also establishes a formal extension of stay process for affected nonimmigrants. However, a federal court has issued an injunction delaying the enforcement of the rule.
- The [United States](#) has rescinded the 2022 public charge regulations, effective 18 September 2026. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) stated that the change is intended to provide officers with greater discretion to consider a broader range of public benefits and information when assessing whether an applicant is likely to become a public charge.



- The [United States](#) has issued two executive orders aimed at restricting birth tourism and limiting recognition of US citizenship in certain circumstances where neither parent is a US citizen. The measures direct federal agencies to increase scrutiny of travel and visa applications linked to birth tourism and to revise policies relating to citizenship documentation; however, implementation details and potential legal challenges may affect the scope and impact of these changes.
- The [United States](#) Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) published an Interim Final Rule (IFR) with a request for comments that authorizes the agency to require mandatory online filing for certain immigration benefit requests (case types). The rule is effective 11 August 2026 and is intended to further modernize USCIS operations and reduce reliance on paper-based filings.
- The [United States](#) Citizenship and Immigration Services has updated its guidance on how it will assess whether adjustment of status (AOS) applicants are likely to rely on government assistance and become a public charge. Effective 18 September 2026, officers will consider a range of factors, including an applicant's financial circumstances, health, education, family situation and use of certain public benefits, and applicants must use a new Form I-485 for filings submitted on or after that date.
- The [United States](#) Department of State (DOS) has expanded its expedited visitor visa appointment pilot program to additional consular posts, allowing eligible applicants to pay a \$750 fee for interview appointments within 10 business days, subject to availability.
- The [United States](#) Department of State (DOS) has temporarily paused the scheduling of immigrant visa appointments worldwide while consular officers receive training on updated public charge assessment requirements. As a result, immigrant visa applicants may experience interview delays and rescheduling, although the pause does not affect the validity of underlying immigrant visa petitions.
- The [United States](#) Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has proposed to eliminate the 60-day grace period that currently allows certain foreign workers to remain in the country after their employment ends. If implemented, impacted workers and their dependents may need to leave the country immediately unless they qualify for another immigration status.

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Across North America immigration policy continues to evolve in response to economic priorities, workforce demands, and increasing pressure to strengthen compliance and border security. Governments are adopting more targeted approaches to attracting and retaining talent while introducing heightened scrutiny, reporting obligations, and enforcement measures that are reshaping how organizations source, deploy and manage global talent. In the United States, employers face growing uncertainty as policy initiatives may affect work authorization processes, employment-based immigration pathways and broader workforce planning strategies. While specific court decisions have provided temporary relief in some areas, the overall environment remains increasingly compliance-driven and less predictable. Canada continues to pursue a more targeted and regionally driven immigration strategy, with provinces playing a growing role in talent selection and economic immigration.

As workforce mobility becomes increasingly intertwined with business, talent and risk strategies, organizations that remain agile, strengthen compliance frameworks, and embed immigration planning into broader workforce decision-making will be best positioned to access critical talent and support long-term growth.



– Roxanne Israel, EY Americas Immigration Markets Leader

Looking ahead

- In the United States, the transition toward mandatory online filing and the introduction of new public charge assessment standards may require employers and foreign nationals to place greater emphasis on filing preparation, documentation and case tracking. As adjudication practices continue to evolve, incomplete or inconsistent filings may face increased scrutiny.

Asia-Pacific

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Recent immigration changes across Asia-Pacific highlight a clear trend: governments are sharpening their focus on attracting priority talent while increasing compliance expectations for employers. As immigration laws become ever more closely linked to workforce and economic policy, organizations will need a strategic, data-driven approach to talent mobility to remain competitive and compliant.

– Linda Rowe, EY Asia-Pacific Immigration Markets Leader, *EY People Profile*



Employer obligations and benefits

- [Australia](#) announced adjustments to charges and thresholds effective 1 July 2026, including increases to visa application charges and skilled visa income thresholds.
- [Australia](#) has revised its skilled visa processing framework, giving priority to applicants in selected occupations and those applying from within Australia. Employers sponsoring applicants outside Australia or in non-priority occupations should plan for potential processing delays when managing workforce needs, mobilization and start dates.
- [Malaysia](#)'s Expatriate Services Division (ESD) reminded employers that all pass-shortening, Transfer of Endorsement and Take-up Balance applications for expatriates under its jurisdiction must be submitted through the ESD online portal. Employers should also provide details of any cases previously processed manually via email so that ESD can update its online system.
- [Malaysia](#) has introduced new Sabah Work Pass requirements. From 3 July 2026, oil and gas employers must identify offshore work locations for foreign and non-Sabahan Malaysian workers assigned offshore. From 1 September 2026, foreign applicants must also submit a Certificate of Good Conduct (COGC).
- [New Zealand](#) has implemented significant changes to its Skilled Migrant Category (SMC) Resident Visa and related Work to Residence pathways. The reforms introduce two new SMC pathways, amend the existing points-based pathway, clarify wage threshold rules, and strengthen qualification, work experience and genuine employment requirements.
- [Singapore](#) has updated the sector-specific salary benchmarks under the COMPASS framework. The revised benchmarks will apply to new Employment Pass (EP) applications from 1 January 2027 and to renewals of passes expiring on or after 1 July 2027.



- [Vietnam](#) has implemented the Apostille Convention effective 11 September 2026, allowing certain foreign public documents from jurisdictions that maintain an Apostille relationship with Vietnam to be used without consular legalization.

Individual obligations and benefits

- The [Chinese Mainland](#) has implemented new exit and entry management regulations. The regulations expand the circumstances under which individuals may face restrictions on exiting or entering the Chinese Mainland, introduce stricter compliance requirements for applicants and intermediary agencies, and establish a framework for travel risk warnings and safety reminders.
- [India](#) has launched a digital Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) card system under which cardholders must update their passport details each time a new passport is issued, but will no longer need OCI reissuance after age 20, benefiting from a fully online process, faster processing and enhanced security.
- [India](#) has introduced a mandatory health self-declaration requirement for all international air travelers arriving in the country, as part of enhanced Ebola disease surveillance measures.
- [Malaysia](#) has introduced new photo requirements to enable an automated photo validation feature for all online Single-Entry Visa applications submitted under the Visa with Reference category through the MYVISA portal, effective 1 July 2026. Photographs that do not meet the new requirements will not pass the automated validation process.
- The [Republic of Korea](#) formally adopted its Digital Nomad Visa (F-1-D) program following approximately two and a half years of pilot operations. The revised framework introduces tiered income thresholds based on applicants' age and intended place of residence and extends the maximum stay period from two years to three years.
- [Singapore](#) will open applications for the ONE Pass AI and Tech track on 28 January 2027 and discontinue new and renewal applications under the existing Tech.Pass. The new route is designed to attract senior AI and technology talent and provide greater work flexibility.
- [Thailand](#) announced revisions to its visa exemption and visa-on-arrival (VoA) policies effective 15 September 2026. The changes revoke the previous 60-day visa exemption program, reduce the list of countries and territories eligible for visa-exempt entry, introduce a strictly limited 15-day visa exemption program for certain nationalities and significantly restrict access to VoA.

Looking ahead

- In Malaysia, new Sabah Work Pass requirements are expected to increase planning and documentation obligations for employers operating in the oil and gas sector. From 15 September 2026, Thailand again narrowed the visa-exempt entry and visa-on-arrival access, replacing the 60-day exemption with a limited 15-day scheme.

Europe

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Developments across Europe reflect a clear regional trend toward more structured immigration management. Governments continue to introduce measures to attract and retain international talent, while also strengthening compliance requirements, eligibility criteria and workforce controls. Organizations should monitor these changes closely, as they may have important implications for talent mobility, workforce planning and compliance obligations.



Across the Middle East, immigration policy is increasingly aligned with broader economic and workforce priorities. Governments are balancing the attraction of global investment and specialized talent with a sustained focus on workforce localization and stronger employer accountability. For organizations, navigating this evolving landscape will require a forward-looking approach that integrates immigration compliance with workforce and talent planning.

– Ben J Willis, EY Global Immigration Competency Leader, *EY People Profile*

Employer obligations and benefits

- [Algeria](#) has implemented the Hague Apostille Convention, replacing consular legalization requirements for certain public documents exchanged between Algeria and other Convention member countries.
- In [Belgium](#), government fees have increased for all Type D Visa applications submitted on or after 1 July 2026.
- Effective 1 September 2026, [Belgium](#)'s Flemish Region requires employers submitting combined permit applications to pay a new regional fee of EUR 180 per application, in addition to the existing federal contribution.
- [Belgium](#) has modernized its frontier worker framework, expanding eligibility to a broader range of cross-border workers and introducing new procedures and documentation requirements for certain non-EU nationals.
- [Denmark](#) has approved a new collective agreement-based work permit scheme for certified employers, effective 1 January 2027. The scheme will allow qualifying employers to sponsor foreign nationals from 16 designated third countries under a substantially lower salary threshold.
- [Finland](#) is expected to introduce a citizenship test in 2027 as part of broader reforms to its Citizenship Act. Under the new rules, most citizenship applicants will be required to demonstrate civic knowledge by passing the test or meeting alternative educational requirements, while certain age groups and individuals may be exempt from this requirement.
- [Georgia](#) has expanded work authorization exemptions for certain foreign nationals, replaced prior job posting and labor market testing requirements with a new employer quota system, and clarified the rules governing short-term professional activities which may also create opportunities for certain foreign nationals to move into longer-term employment.



- [Germany](#) has adopted a bill that partially implements the EU Single Permit Directive, streamlining certain immigration procedures for third-country nationals who are legally residing and working in Germany.
- [Ireland](#) has approved the drafting of legislation that would revise citizenship by naturalization requirements, including residence, language, civics and self-sufficiency criteria. If enacted, the changes could affect workforce planning for employers that rely on international talent.
- [Poland](#) proposes comprehensive amendments to its framework governing the employment of foreign nationals. The draft legislation introduces new work permit exemptions for selected nationalities/residents and extensive procedural and compliance obligations for employers.
- [Slovakia](#) has implemented significant amendments to its immigration framework, introducing procedural changes for visas and residence permits, expanded digitalization measures, updates affecting temporary protection beneficiaries and new requirements for appointments at the Foreign Police Department.
- The [United Kingdom](#) confirmed that it will expand its illegal working regime from 1 October 2026, extending right-to-work compliance obligations beyond traditional employees to contractors, freelancers, subcontractors, gig workers and other contingent labor. Employers relying on non-traditional workforce models may need to enhance compliance processes, as noncompliance can result in civil penalties of up to £60,000 per illegal worker.
- The [United Kingdom](#) announced the conclusion of a new Free Trade Agreement with Switzerland, which includes measures to facilitate the mobility of business travelers and certain employees between the two countries. The agreement has not yet entered into force and remains subject to parliamentary scrutiny, approval and implementation in both countries.
- The [United Kingdom](#) announced the Migration Advisory Committee's recommendations for the new Temporary Shortage List and an expanded Global Talent Visa Endorsed Funder pathway. These measures are intended to attract and retain highly skilled international talent while reducing employers' long-term reliance on overseas recruitment for mid-skilled roles.
- The [United Kingdom](#) has introduced changes to its Sponsor Management System (SMS) that impact all UK sponsor license holders. Key updates include the phased rollout of mandatory multi-factor authentication for SMS users, the removal of the level two user role and increased monitoring of inactive accounts.
- The [United Kingdom](#) is introducing extended liability provisions under its right-to-work framework effective 1 October 2026. Businesses higher up the contractual chain may be treated as the employer for right-to-work purposes and could face civil penalties where prescribed compliance requirements have not been met, increasing compliance risks across subcontracting and outsourced workforce arrangements.



Individual obligations and benefits

- The [European Union](#) countries agreed to extend temporary protection for individuals displaced from Ukraine until 4 March 2028. They also agreed that future applicants must have fulfilled their military obligations in Ukraine, although existing beneficiaries will not be affected.
- The [European Union](#) has adopted temporary restrictions on Schengen visa provisions for Guinean nationals, citing insufficient cooperation by Guinea on the readmission of its nationals who do not have the right to reside in EU Member States.
- [Germany](#) announced that nationals of India no longer require an airport transit visa when transiting through a German airport, provided they remain within the international transit area.
- [Ireland](#) announced measures to address ongoing delays in the processing of Irish Residence Permit (IRP) renewal applications.
- [Ireland](#) has announced a temporary initiative to facilitate travel for Irish Residence Permit renewal applicants during the summer period.
- [Kazakhstan](#) has implemented a new Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) system for certain visa-exempt travelers. Travelers who are subject to the requirement may obtain an ETA no later than 72 hours prior to their travel, as failure to do so could become grounds for refusal of entry.

Looking ahead

- Belgium has expanded frontier worker eligibility and introduced new requirements for certain non-EU nationals while Germany's partial implementation of the EU Single Permit Directive may expand options for employers seeking to attract and retain foreign talent in key occupations. At the same time, the United Kingdom's expanded right-to-work requirements are expected to increase compliance obligations for organizations engaging contingent workers.

Africa and Middle East

Employer obligations and benefits

- [Ghana](#) has introduced new investment and immigration reforms, including revised capital investment thresholds linked to expatriate quota eligibility governed by the Ghana Investment Promotion Authority (GIPA). Businesses are now required to route work permit applications through GIPA, while employers in the oil and gas, mining and free zones sectors should continue to apply through their respective regulators.
- [Saudi Arabia](#) announced an increase in the Saudization rate for certain project management professions in the private sector to 70%, effective 14 February 2027.
- [South Africa](#) launched phase two of the Trusted Employer Scheme (TES) as part of its efforts to attract skilled talent and streamline immigration processes, inviting qualifying employers to submit expressions of interest for admission to the scheme.
- [South Africa](#) published its service turnaround times for visa, permit and related immigration applications for the 2026 to 2027 period. The published processing times apply to applications submitted within South Africa and are effective from 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2027.
- [Guinea](#) has announced visa measures affecting EU nationals in response to temporary Schengen visa restrictions recently announced by the European Union, including the temporary suspension of multiple-entry visas, longer visa processing times, and new processing fees for diplomatic and service passport holders.
- [Kuwait](#) introduced a new residency framework, allowing eligible foreign investors and senior executives in Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA)-licensed companies to obtain residency permits valid for up to 15 years.
- Several countries across the [Middle East](#) region continue to impose precautionary travel and public health measures following the Ebola outbreak in Central and East Africa.
- [Oman](#) has halted the issuance and renewal of work permits for foreign nationals aged over 60, reversing a policy introduced in January 2022 that removed the age ceiling for private sector foreign employees.
- [Saudi Arabia](#) introduced a new Electronic Travel Authorization for UK nationals, which can be used for tourism, business travel, study and medical treatment purposes.
- Effective 1 July 2026, [South Africa](#) requires all travelers entering or leaving the country to submit a mandatory online traveler declaration before travel. The new requirement applies to South African nationals, permanent residents and foreign nationals.
- [South Africa](#) has waived the medical report requirement for all temporary residence visa and permanent residence applications.
- [Angola](#) has launched a new online portal that allows eligible foreign nationals to apply for business/tourist visas electronically before traveling to the country.
- [Bahrain](#) has introduced private medical insurance as a mandatory requirement for new dependent visa applications.

Individual obligations and benefits

Looking ahead

- Ghana has revised investment, expatriate quota and work permit requirements for the oil and gas industry. Meanwhile, South Africa has introduced a mandatory online traveler declaration for all travelers, and Bahrain has implemented private medical insurance requirements for new dependent visa applications.



A person is seen from behind, standing in a large airport terminal with a floor-to-ceiling window. They are holding a black rolling suitcase and looking out at an airplane on the tarmac under a bright, hazy sky. The scene is bathed in warm, golden light, suggesting sunrise or sunset. The person is wearing a light-colored long-sleeved shirt and dark trousers.

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