

DIGITAL NOMADS AND REMOTE WORKERS FACT SHEET

With an estimated loss of \$1.3 trillion in global export revenue from severely reduced tourism and international travel in 2020¹, many countries where the tourism industry was battered by the pandemic are replacing their depleted tourism revenue stream with remote work visa programs.

Residing in one country while working for an employer in a different country is not a novel concept, but there were limited ways to do so legitimately until recently. Antiquated visa systems required travelers to define themselves as entrepreneurs or workers and required a company to sponsor their stay — an expensive, bureaucratic route with few guarantees. Instead, most people chose to label themselves as “tourists” but risked fines and/or deportation if caught.

Sometimes referred to as “digital nomads” or “remote workers”, this workforce is likely to become entrenched in work practices worldwide for many occupations – making them an attractive sector for traditional tourist destinations. Terms that once seemed only suitable for creative professions are now common vocabulary among corporations, organizations and even government agencies – let’s define them:

Type of Worker	Definition	Cross-border?
Remote Workers	Individuals who work outside of a traditional office, such as a home or hotel that may be located beyond commuting distance of their employer's office (including in another country).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Digital Nomads	Workers who use technology to perform their work from any location and sometimes move across borders to combine travel/tourism with work.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Telecommuters	Individuals who work remotely (either from their residence or another workspace outside the office, but not a client site) within commuting distance of their employer's office. Work arrangement can range from 20% to 100% of the full work period.	<input type="checkbox"/>

¹ United Nations World Tourism Organization; <https://www.unwto.org/news/2020-worst-year-in-tourism-history-with-1-billion-fewer-international-arrivals>

Key features of the available immigration programs for remote work and digital nomad immigration programs in Fragomen-tracked jurisdictions are summarized below. Note that there may be other countries that allow remote work under other work authorizations or under other circumstances, many of which existed before the pandemic. This table is meant to highlight the programs that were developed since mid-2020 in response to travel restrictions affecting workers during COVID-19.

Available programs

Under most of these programs, foreign nationals are authorized to work and stay in the country for a specified period of time, provided:

- Their employer is outside of the country (or they are self-employed);
- They do not intend on entering the local labor market, performing any work for a company in the country and/or providing any goods and services to a local business; and
- They meet the minimum annual earnings requirements and/or provide evidence of funds to finance their stay in the country, as required.

Countries with Digital Nomad Programs

(Click the name to view our Immigration Alert about the program's creation)

1. Albania	15. Czech Republic	29. Malaysia	43. St. Lucia
2. Anguilla	16. Dominica	30. Malta	44. Taiwan
3. Antigua and Barbuda	17. Ecuador	31. Mauritius	45. Thailand (Long-Term Resident Visa & Destination Thailand Visa)
4. Argentina	18. Estonia	32. Montenegro	46. Türkiye
5. Aruba	19. Greece	33. Montserrat	47. United Arab Emirates
6. Barbados	20. Hungary	34. Namibia	48. Uruguay
7. Belize	21. Iceland	35. Panama	
8. Brazil	22. Indonesia	36. Portugal	
9. Cape Verde	23. Italy	37. Romania	
10. Colombia	24. Japan	38. Seychelles	
11. Costa Rica	25. Kazakhstan (Neo Nomad Visa & Digital Nomad Visa Offering Permanent Residence)	39. Sri Lanka	
12. Croatia	26. Latvia	40. Spain	
13. Curacao	27. Kenya	41. South Africa	
14. Cyprus	28. Kyrgyzstan	42. South Korea	

What's next?

- Estonia was the first country to implement a Digital Nomad Visa in 2020, and others followed suit. Other countries will look at these new remote work programs as they evaluate their own potential to draw high earning visitors to replenish their lost tourist revenue stream and remain globally competitive in attracting foreign talent. While it's too early to evaluate program success across recent rollouts, countries in the early stages of program development will eventually benefit from lessons learned and in a better position to suitably tailor their own programs.

Countries expected to implement remote work visa programs in the future include **Canada**², **Grenada**, **Lithuania**, **Peru**, **New Zealand**, the **Philippines**, **Slovakia**, **Slovenia (effective in November 2025)**, and **Thailand** (through the Global Digital Talent Visa - a special visa for digital nomads which aims to attract foreign AI experts to Thailand).

- Watch for renewed focus on technology infrastructure as countries look to market themselves as sought-after destinations for remote workers dependent on a reliable broadband connection. Countries that can provide reliable broadband connection will be more attractive to those seeking flexible work arrangements.
- Immigration programs designed to attract foreign remote workers and digital nomads will provide a springboard for potential investors and self-starters who cannot access a dedicated immigration pathway – either because they cannot meet its high bar or because an option for work authorization without local sponsorship doesn't exist. This pattern may push some countries to carve out or expand options for investors and innovators, so they remain competitive in the race for global talent.
- The higher-skilled workers with high earning potential will continue to be the favored foreign workforce; a continuation of the stark divide between high-skilled and lower-skilled workers. Digital nomad programs require flexible, mobile work arrangements that are generally reserved for high-skilled professionals; yet again, minimum income requirements may squeeze out lower-skilled gig workers from these programs.

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² Under current Canadian rules, digital nomads can stay in Canada for up to six months under visitor status while working remotely for a foreign employer. The government has stated it is exploring potential policies to attract digital nomads under its "Tech Talent Strategy."