

WORLDWIDE IMMIGRATION TRENDS REPORT

Q2 2020 SUPPLEMENT



NEW TYPE OF RESTRICTIVISM.

While the extreme entry restrictions implemented through March 2020 have somewhat eased, a new type of restrictive policy trend developed: immigration policy became directly tied to health and medical information. Policies began to focus heavily on health certificates, medical screenings and other related measures. The invasiveness and complexity of the health and entry requirements varied widely across the world.

UNPRECEDENTED EMPLOYMENT RATES DUE TO COVID-19 EXACERBATED EXISTING RESTRICTIVE POLICYMAKING.

Some governments directly tied economic concerns to reasoning for their immigration restrictions.



The projected unemployment rate in the 27 OECD countries by the end of 2020, up from 5.3% from the end of 2019. This is expected to raise to 12% should a second pandemic wave hit.



MANDATORY QUARANTINES MAKE TRAVEL DIFFICULT.

Faced with the inconvenience and interruption caused by mandatory quarantines on both sides of travel, many travelers were reluctant (or unable) to partake in any form of travel during 2020. These factors weigh toward long-term travel instead of short-term travel, a reversal of the previous trend.



DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION ACCELERATED DURING COVID-19.

To try to rescue immigration processes from a prolonged standstill over COVID-19 government closures, governments:

- ▶ transitioned more immigration processes to existing online systems
- ▶ implemented electronic processes where none existed
- ▶ waived in-person appearances more than ever before
- ▶ **Result:** countries that had successful electronic immigration application systems before COVID-19 fared better at handling the move to online processing than those with poor electronic infrastructure.

WORK-FROM-ANYWHERE PHENOMENON ACCELERATED.

Traditional work environments transitioned quickly to “work-from-anywhere” as companies moved workers to remote work during lockdowns. This high-volume switchover was especially problematic for foreign workers, since their situations ranged from:

- ▶ being in countries with no explicit provisions or concessions for remote work during COVID-19
- ▶ working remotely in a country other than the one where they were authorized to work
- ▶ working remotely in a country that explicitly did not allow remote work (though there are very few of those)
- ▶ **Result:** Due to this uncharted legislative and policy ground, as well as hasty decisions made by governments and employers to address immediate needs, a period of chaos ensued.

Many people worked from home during the COVID-19 lockdown

2 out of 5 workers were able to work from home in April 2020 across the OECD.



Image from OECD Employment Outlook 2020 - Worker Security and the COVID-19 Crisis, available at https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=134_134992-5cqpaak6j3&title=Employment-Outlook-2020-Highlights.

WHAT'S NEXT?



CONSTANTLY-CHANGING ENTRY RULES

Generally, as borders open, more health-based entry rules are implemented. Many countries are expected to implement more stringent health checks and even COVID-19 testing into their permanent immigration processes.



RAISED STANDARDS FOR BUSINESS/WORK ENTRY

As national lockdowns are lifted, many governments will likely raise the bar for work permits and business visas—especially where immigration officials have broad decision-making discretion—as a way to limit the volume of entrants.



BURSTING OF TRAVEL BUBBLES

Travel bubbles, which were a rising trend in Q1 2020, may continue to form in some parts of the world, but are vague and difficult to utilize.



BACKLOGS

Most governments are partially reopening operations, but application processing backlogs and delays are expected in the months ahead as staff and facilities limit operations to observe health safety measures.



ONLINE IMMIGRATION PROCESSING TO PROGRESS

The forced rush into digital government systems during COVID-19 to prevent processing standstills and backlogs may result in more permanent online processes for immigration applications in many countries.



MORE REMOTE WORK VISAS AHEAD

As the gap between the “new normal” remote work culture and traditional regulatory framework widens, governments will start to adapt, but slowly and with resistance.

- ▶ Estonia, Barbados and Bermuda have already implemented remote work visas
- **Warning:** workers and employers who follow remote work practices may unknowingly put themselves at risk of noncompliance with many aspects of the law, exposing them to possible fines or other penalties or even losing their rights to hire foreign labor.

To access the full Worldwide Immigration Trends Report, visit Fragomen's dedicated [website](#).

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