

Securing a U.S. visa has become significantly more difficult in 2025, with citizens from countries such as Rwanda, Algeria, Guinea, Burundi, and others facing unprecedented denial rates, according to a new study by Brooks Law Firm.

The surge in visa refusals is largely attributed to the return of strict immigration policies under President Donald Trump's second term. Tighter vetting procedures, concerns over national security, and increased scrutiny of applicants' ties to their home countries have made visa approvals nearly impossible for many.

The report, which analyzed data from January to March 2025, shows a systemic shift in how U.S. authorities view visa applications treating entry as a privilege rather than an entitlement. Drawing from U.S. government sources, passport indexes, and online immigration trends, the study found that countries grappling with political instability, economic hardship, or histories of visa violations are facing the steepest barriers.

"There's a noticeable hardening in how U.S. consular officers assess risk," said Lisa Brooks, lead author of the report and an immigration attorney. "Applicants from certain countries are being filtered through a much narrower lens."

Top Countries Facing Visa Hurdles

Among the hardest-hit nations is Rwanda, which topped the list for visa refusals. Despite economic progress, concerns over political freedoms, alleged human rights violations, and fears of overstay have led to rising rejections.

"I applied to attend a tech conference in Boston, but I was denied without any clear reason," said Aimée Uwizeye, a Rwandan entrepreneur. "It feels like the decision had already been made before my interview."

Following Rwanda are Algeria, Guinea, Burundi, and Senegal—each facing unique but overlapping challenges, including political unrest, weak passports, and economic instability.

- **Algeria:** High refusal rates are linked to prior visa overstays, internal unrest, and applicants' difficulty proving strong ties to home.
- **Guinea:** A fragile economy and weak passport raise concerns among U.S. officials about potential asylum claims or overstays.
- **Burundi:** Years of political turmoil have placed the country among those

deemed high-risk for migration violations.

- **Senegal**: Despite strong U.S.-Senegal relations, many applicants are rejected for unclear travel intentions or inadequate financial documentation.

One Non-African Country Makes the List

Uzbekistan is the only non-African nation in the top 10, with a refusal rate of 64.4%. Economic struggles and past visa misuse by citizens have drawn greater scrutiny from U.S. authorities.

Visa Overstays and Fraud Weigh Heavily

Gambia and Benin also face high refusal rates due to previous incidents of visa overstays and fraudulent applications. In both countries, applicants now face rigorous background checks and demands for extensive documentation.

In **Uganda**, visa rejections are driven by applicants' inability to prove strong economic or familial ties at home. Similarly, **Kenya**, despite a high volume of immigration-related searches has a visa refusal rate of over 63%, with officials citing incomplete documentation and unclear travel plans.

Continental Implications for Africa

The report also underscores growing barriers across Africa. In 2025, the U.S. continued to exclude all African nations from the Visa Waiver Program. In a controversial move, visas for South Sudanese citizens were revoked entirely, following diplomatic tensions and deportation disputes.

"There's a growing sense that African travelers are being treated with disproportionate suspicion," said Malik Birore, a Burundian student who was recently denied a U.S. study visa. "We're applying for opportunities, not planning to disappear into America."

The Brooks Law Firm findings paint a stark picture: As the U.S. reinforces its immigration policies, applicants from politically fragile or economically disadvantaged countries are likely to face even greater obstacles.

"The U.S. is clearly prioritizing security over openness," said Brooks. "But in doing so, it's closing doors to thousands of legitimate travelers."