

GMS Flash Alert

Immigration

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Saudi Arabia – Qiwa Introduces Instant Work Visa Caps and Company Eligibility Requirements

The Qiwa platform, operated by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (MHRSD) of Saudi Arabia, has released updated regulations regarding the issuance of instant work visas for companies operating within the Kingdom.¹

WHY THIS MATTERS

These new regulations set clear limits and eligibility requirements for Saudi companies seeking to employ non-Saudi nationals, directly affecting global mobility strategies and workforce planning. For global mobility managers, HR leaders, and payroll professionals, these changes may affect recruitment timelines, compliance obligations, and overall operational flexibility. The restrictions on the number of instant visas, differentiated by company age and Saudization performance, may necessitate adjustments to hiring plans and may increase the administrative burden for companies with frequent workforce needs. For globally mobile employees, the revised requirements may affect opportunities for assignments in Saudi Arabia and necessitate closer attention to visa eligibility criteria.

Background

Previously, the criteria and limits for instant work visa issuance through Qiwa were less clearly defined, with businesses generally navigating a more flexible but less transparent process. The current update introduces explicit caps based on the age of the business and ties visa availability more closely to Saudization (localization) rates and compliance with specific labor regulations.

Key Highlights

The updated Qiwa regulations introduce structured limits and clarify requirements for Saudi companies seeking to obtain instant work visas for non-Saudi workers. These measures are part of ongoing efforts to manage labor market dynamics and enhance compliance with Saudization objectives.

Visa limits

- **Newly established businesses (less than two years old):** Up to five instant visas.

- **Businesses older than two years:** Up to 50 instant visas, either in a single application or through multiple applications within the same week.
- **Establishment program participants:** Start with two visas, with additional visas possible for companies that improve their Saudization rate.

Ten compliance requirements for foreign recruitment

- **Active business status:** The establishment must be operational and legally active.
- **Valid employee work permits:** All employee work permits must be up to date.
- **Valid Commercial Registration (CR):** The CR must be valid unless the entity is exempt by law.
- **Saudization level – Medium Green or higher:** The company must be classified as Medium Green or above in the Saudization program.
- **Wage protection and labor compliance:** The business must comply with the Wage Protection System and have no outstanding labor violations.
- **Sufficient balance on ministry platforms:** Adequate financial credit must be maintained on Ministry of Interior platforms (such as Absher or Muqeem).
- **Annual self-assessment:** Establishments with ten or more employees must complete the annual self-assessment.
- **Employee work locations assigned via Qiwa:** Work locations for employees must be assigned through the Qiwa platform.
- **Employer age requirement:** The employer or business owner must be at least 18 years old.
- **Available recruitment quota:** The company must have an available recruitment quota for the requested visa type.

Types of work visas available through Qiwa²

- **Permanent work visa:** For long-term contracts.
- **Temporary work visa:** For contracts up to three months.
- **Hajj and Umrah temporary work visa:** For seasonal work, subject to MHRSD approval.

KPMG INSIGHTS

The introduction of explicit instant work visa caps based on company maturity and Saudization rates reflects a more structured and compliance-focused approach to foreign worker recruitment in Saudi Arabia. Employers may need to pay closer attention to Saudization performance, labor compliance, and administrative readiness when assessing work visa eligibility.

In light of the changes, organizations might wish to consider the following:

- Organizations could systematically review their compliance with all ten requirements before initiating recruitment of non-Saudi workers.

- HR and mobility teams could check that all required documentation and platform processes (such as employee location assignments and self-assessments) are up to date.
- Companies planning to expand or initiate operations in Saudi Arabia could incorporate these visa limits into their workforce planning and onboarding strategies.

If assignees and/or their programme managers have any questions or concerns about the update, they should consult with their qualified immigration professional or a member of the GMS/People Services team with KPMG in the Lower Gulf (see the Contacts section).

ENDNOTES:

1 Saudi Expatriates website, “Qiwa explains instant visa limits and requirements for Saudi Companies,” published on 18 June 2026.

2 For details on the visa types and FAQs on the process – [Qiwa platform](#).

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Contacts

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