



Recent Developments in International Tourism to the United States

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Lengthy visa interview wait times, stricter border and immigration policies, potential tariffs, the dollar's strength, U.S. [travel restrictions](#) for certain countries, as well other policy actions, have [led](#) some [observers](#) to express concern about the state of international tourism to the United States. These developments come as the United States prepares to host major international events, including the 2026 World Cup and 2028 Summer Olympics.

There are indications that international tourism to the United States has slowed. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce's [International Trade Administration](#) (ITA), international arrivals to the United States in 2025 [decreased 5.5%](#) from 2024. Recent [congressional hearings](#) have also [focused on](#) international tourism to the United States. In April 2025, the head of the U.S. Travel Association, a travel industry trade group, [testified](#) before the House Homeland Security Committee that the United States was losing its status as a top global tourist destination.

Trends in International Tourism to the United States

According to ITA, [68.3 million](#) international visitors came to the United States in 2025—down from 72.3 million in 2024 (and short of the record 79.4 million international visitors recorded in 2018). The 2025 figures marked the first time international visitors to the United States decreased since 2020.

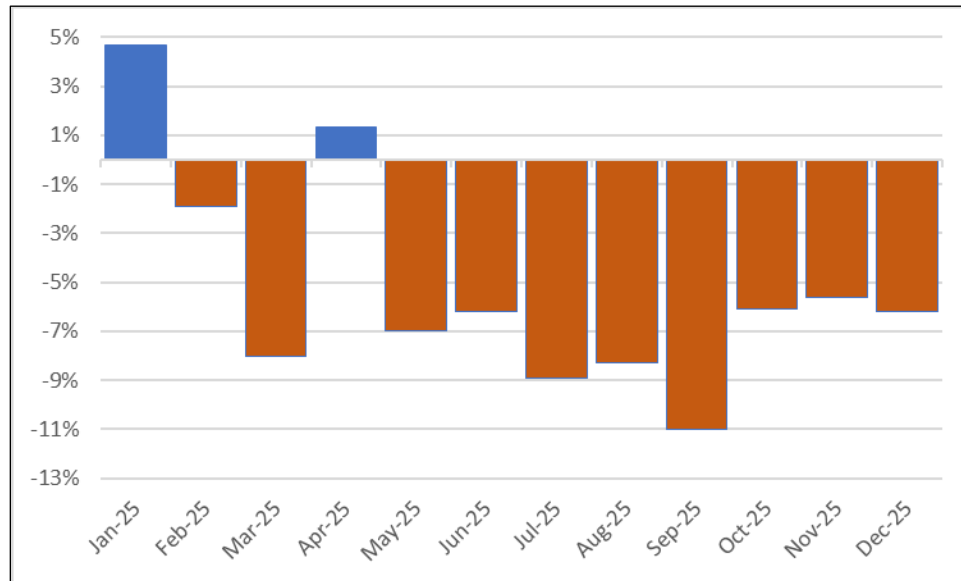
Monthly data on international tourism to the United States over the past year show consistent declines in year-over-year numbers. International visitors to the United States were below prior year levels in 10 months in 2025. **Figure 1** presents 2025 data on the monthly percentage change of international arrivals to the United States compared to the same month in 2024. The number for January 2026 was also negative when compared with the same month in 2025 at -3.5%. This contrasts with January 2025, when international visitors to the United States increased 5.5% compared with January 2024.

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Figure I. Percentage Change in International Arrivals to the United States
Compared to same month in prior year



Source: International Trade Administration, *I-94 Monthly Summary and Analysis Reports, Final Release (Overseas, Mexico, and Canada)*, <https://www.trade.gov/i-94-arrivals-program>.

Notes: Blue bars denote increases.

When looking at visitors' countries of residence, trends are mixed. Among the 20 countries with the **most arrivals** to the United States in 2025, nine had more arrivals than in 2024, and 11 had fewer. The percentage increase was highest for Israel (15.6%) and Argentina (14.9%). Canada (-20.9%) and Germany (-11.3%) had the biggest decreases. In 2024, **Canada and Mexico** had, respectively, the most and second-most arrivals to the United States. In 2025, Canadian arrivals to the United States were down (as referenced above), and arrivals from Mexico were 6.4% higher than in 2024. (For context, Mexican arrivals to the United States increased by 17.6% from 2023 to 2024.)

Potential Economic Impacts

Declining numbers of international visitors could impact the U.S. economy. According to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, in 2023, travel and tourism (both domestic and international) accounted for **approximately 3%** of U.S. gross domestic product (GDP). According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), a nonprofit organization that advocates for and researches global tourism, international visitor spending in the United States was approximately **\$176 billion** in 2025, a 4.6% decrease from 2024. WTTC further noted that GDP for the travel and tourism sector increased 4.1% globally in 2025 from 2024 but grew 0.9% for the United States. Other sources have forecasted increases in U.S. international visitors in 2026, potentially stalling further negative economic impacts. For example, in October 2025, the U.S. Travel Association **predicted** that international visits to the United States could increase by 3.7% in 2026, partly due to impacts of U.S.-hosted major events such as the 2026 World Cup.

Recent Actions and Considerations for Congress

Congress may wish to assess trends in international tourism and what dynamics may impact those trends going forward. For example, **some media outlets** have **reported concerns** that the 2026 World Cup, which will have games in the United States, Canada, and Mexico in June-July 2026, may fall short of

expectations regarding tourism. Some [Members of Congress](#) and [others](#) have expressed concern about timely visa processing for athletes and fans wishing to travel to the United States for the World Cup and for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, citing the economic value and the “[diplomatic and soft power opportunity](#)” of hosting these large international sporting events. Following COVID-19-related delays in visa processing, visa interview wait times at most U.S. consulates around the world decreased. Some posts, however, continue to experience lengthy [backlogs](#) for tourist visas. In addition, in February 2025, the Trump Administration [narrowed](#) eligibility for waivers of the in-person nonimmigrant visa interview requirement, and in December, it [required](#) applicants to attend interviews in their home countries.

The 119th Congress has taken or sought to take action that may impact tourism. P.L. 119-21, the FY2025 reconciliation act, reduced the cap on annual federal matching funds for Brand USA, a public-private entity promoting travel to the United States, from \$100 million to \$20 million. The law also added new [visa](#) and [admission](#) fees. Citing [concerns](#) about the impacts of the reductions on World Cup tourism, among other things, some Members of the 119th Congress also introduced the VISIT USA Act (H.R. 6128 and S. 3220), which would transfer \$160 million to Brand USA.

The Trump Administration’s focus on immigration enforcement and restriction has led to [concerns](#) about a [dampening effect on travel](#) to the [United States](#), including for [tourism](#). For example, the Administration implemented [new policies](#) restricting travel to the United States for nationals of certain countries. These include two “[travel bans](#)” as well as the imposition of [visa bonds](#) and reductions in tourist visa validity. (For more information, see CRS Report IR10004, *Nationality-Based Immigration Restrictions*.) [Moreover](#), reported [incidents](#) of [tourists](#) and other noncitizens being [detained](#) while traveling to the United States, along with a [proposed](#) five-year social media review for [visa waiver program](#) travelers, may contribute to a [decline](#) in tourist arrivals and have led some countries to [adjust](#) travel [advisories](#) for their citizens wishing to visit the United States.

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