

The Other Side of the Bet

How hard is the job hunt in the countries Africans study in — for the locals themselves, and for the graduate racing a visa clock

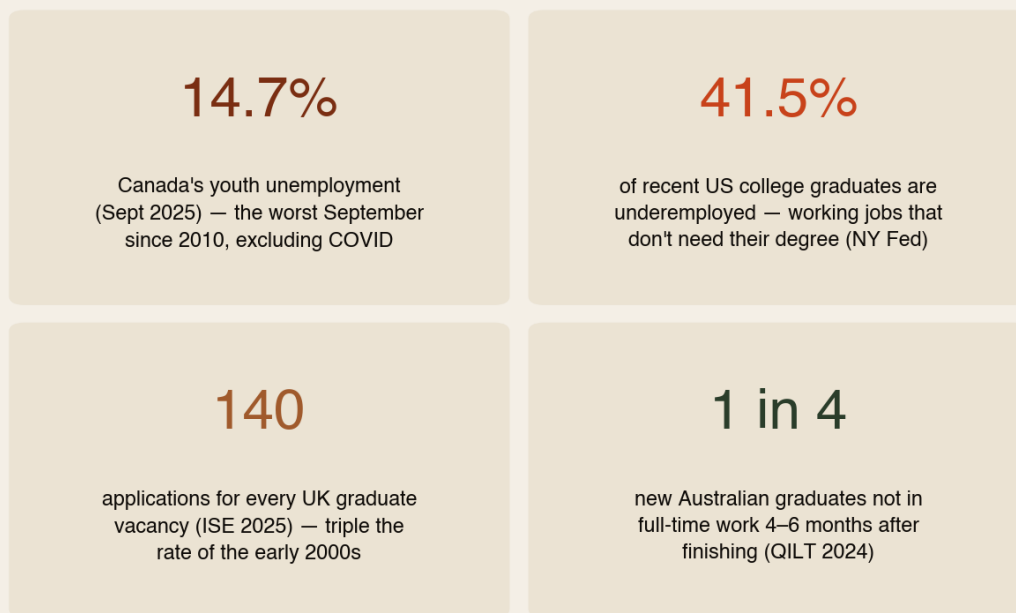
JULY 2026 · FACT-CHECKED · SOURCES CITED

14.7% Canada's youth unemployment — worst September since 2010 ex-COVID	41.5% of recent US graduates are underemployed (NY Fed)	140 applications per UK graduate vacancy (ISE 2025)	+60% extra applications UK minority names need for the same callbacks (Oxford)
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Degrees of Debt showed what Africans pay to study abroad. This companion flips the lens: in the countries they study in, how are the **locals** doing? Because that is the market every African graduate must win — with a visa clock running and a foreign name on the CV. The answer, verified: the locals are having their hardest run in over a decade, in every major Anglo destination at once. Not unwinnable — but the game must be played knowing the score.

Prepared for the Africa Global Forum community · July 2026

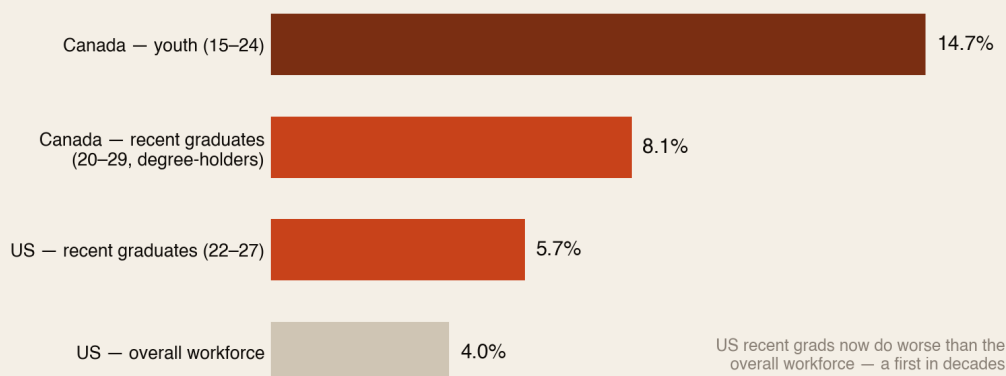
1. How the Locals Are Doing



The host-country baseline, 2025 — all verified (Statistics Canada; NY Fed; ISE; QILT).

This is not a normal moment. Canada's youth joblessness is up 57% in three years — 437,000 young Canadians looking for work. The UK had roughly 1.2 million recent graduates competing for about 17,000 graduate-scheme roles. Entry-level work — the exact rung international graduates need — is the rung being squeezed hardest. None of this makes these countries bad destinations. It makes the brochure out of date.

2. The Graduate Squeeze, Measured

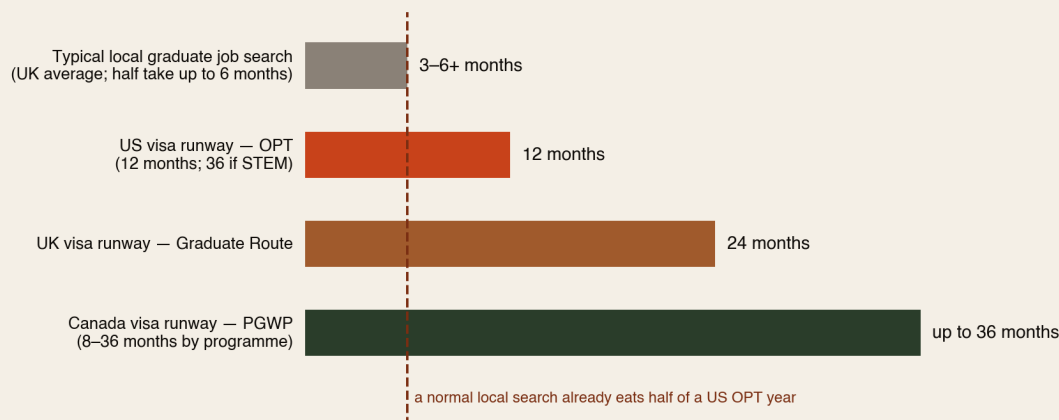


Recent-graduate unemployment vs the wider market (StatCan; NY Fed). Definitions differ across countries — compare within, not across.

Read the US bars twice: for decades a degree meant doing better than the average worker. Right now American recent graduates do worse — and two in five of the employed ones hold jobs that never required the degree. In Canada, a local citizen with a bachelor's and no visa issues still faces 8.1% unemployment. That's the competition — locals having their hardest run in fifteen years.

3. The Search vs the Clock

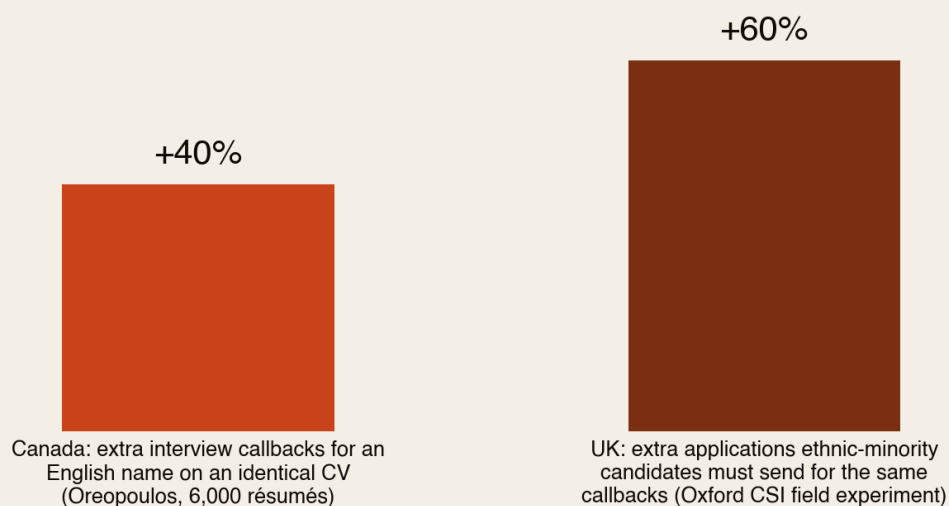
UK data puts the average local graduate search at ~3.8 months, with half taking up to six — with citizenship, references and a lifetime network. Australia measures outcomes at 4–6 months because that's how long settling takes.



A normal local search vs the international graduate's visa runway.

Run the Canada example: a Canadian graduate taking 4–6 months to find work is normal. An African graduate on a PGWP has 8–36 months of runway — but needs a **skilled** job, fast enough to bank qualifying experience for permanent residency before the permit ends. The same “normal” search a local shrugs off consumes margin the international graduate cannot spare — and in the US, a routine six-month search eats half the entire OPT year.

4. The Name on the CV



Field experiments, not anecdotes: Oreopoulos (Toronto, 6,000 résumés); Oxford CSI (UK, unchanged across 50 years of testing).

Identical qualifications, different names: in Toronto, “John Martin” got 40% more interview calls than the same CV under a foreign name. In the UK, applicants with African and other minority names needed 60% more applications for the same callbacks. Fold that into the UK's 140-per-vacancy market: the average candidate needs 140 attempts; the candidate with a Nigerian name effectively needs ~220 (our arithmetic, as illustration). Better to know the number than to internalise the rejections as personal

failure.

5. What This Means for the Bet

The host market is a variable, not a constant. Conversion depends on a job market that is currently the hardest for young people in over a decade — everywhere at once.

“Locals struggle” cuts both ways. High local youth unemployment fuels the politics that caps study permits and tightens graduate routes. Market and visa rules deteriorate together.

Germany is the quiet exception. Lower graduate unemployment, documented skill shortages, an 18-month job-seeker visa — at a third of the Anglo price.

The bet still pays — for the prepared. 86% of Nigerians on the UK Graduate Route found work. The winners started earlier and played the actual game, not the brochure's.

6. The Playbook

Start the job hunt in first year, not final year. If locals take 6 months, budget 9–12 — internships, co-ops and referees must exist before graduation.

Choose programmes with work built in. Canadian co-ops, German Werkstudent jobs, UK placement years convert “no local experience” into a local track record early.

Target the shortage lists. A mid-prestige degree aimed at a shortage occupation beats a famous degree aimed at a saturated one.

Expect the 140 — and route around it. Referrals, associations, professors and alumni bypass the pile — and that's where the name penalty matters least.

Bank the qualifying experience fast. A survival job that outlasts the runway is the trap.

Know the number, keep the confidence. 140 applications and a +60% name penalty make rejection the statistical default, not a verdict on you — the family back home should know this too.

The locals get to treat a six-month search as bad luck. You have to treat it as a plan. That's the whole difference — and it's plannable.

7. How We Checked

Verified: Canada youth 14.7% and recent-graduate 8.1% (Statistics Canada, Sept 2025); +57% youth joblessness in three years; US recent-graduate ~5.7% vs ~4.0% workforce and 41.5% underemployment (NY Fed); 140 applications per UK graduate vacancy, hiring -8% (ISE 2025); ~1.2m UK graduates vs ~17,000 scheme roles (Fortune/ISE); Australia 75.4% undergraduate full-time employment at 4–6 months (QILT 2024); UK average search ~3.8 months, half up to 6 (industry surveys); +40% callbacks for English names in Canada (Oreopoulos/J-PAL); +60% applications for UK minority names, unchanged ~50 years (Oxford CSI). **Visa runways** as of 2025–26, subject to change: US OPT 12 (36 STEM); UK 24; Canada 8–36 months. **Honest limits:** national definitions differ — compare within countries; the ~220-applications line is our labelled arithmetic; time-to-job figures are industry surveys. Companion report: Degrees of Debt (africaglobalforum.com).