



Best Countries 2021

Global rankings, international news and data insights



RANK	COUNTRY	AGILITY	ENTREPRENEURSHIP	QUALITY OF LIFE	MOVERS	SOCIAL PURPOSE	CULTURAL INFLUENCE	OPEN FOR BUSINESS	POWER	ADVENTURE	HERITAGE
1	Canada	3	6	1	46	1	14	3	12	19	33
2	Japan	7	1	13	6	20	5	26	6	28	10
3	Germany	4	2	9	39	11	9	18	4	47	27
4	Switzerland	14	7	5	21	9	8	1	17	13	21
5	Australia	2	12	6	18	8	16	12	16	8	23
6	United States	1	3	20	24	19	3	45	1	31	16
7	New Zealand	9	19	10	16	3	19	6	31	7	28
8	United Kingdom	12	4	14	42	14	4	23	5	37	13
9	Sweden	10	10	3	45	4	10	5	26	22	38
10	Netherlands	8	11	7	40	5	18	10	23	15	31
11	France	17	14	17	33	15	2	28	7	12	4
12	Denmark	11	13	2	53	2	21	4	34	36	51
13	Norway	15	15	4	34	6	23	7	32	20	35
14	Singapore	5	8	16	4	25	15	14	20	18	36
15	South Korea	6	5	18	8	29	7	39	8	52	42
16	Italy	19	21	22	20	17	1	30	15	2	2
17	China	13	9	23	5	68	11	55	2	55	12
18	Finland	18	18	8	44	7	24	9	45	26	43
19	Spain	20	25	19	29	18	6	27	18	3	1
20	Belgium	16	17	12	58	12	26	13	24	38	29
21	Austria	22	16	11	59	10	27	15	35	23	22
22	United Arab Emirates	21	20	24	1	76	12	51	10	53	53
23	Ireland	23	23	15	38	13	31	8	43	14	18
24	Russia	25	22	31	11	43	28	78	3	51	15
25	India	30	28	38	2	60	25	43	13	41	6
26	Brazil	24	37	52	9	34	13	68	19	1	14
27	Greece	32	32	26	17	21	17	34	49	4	3
28	Thailand	36	36	29	7	53	22	17	27	5	7
29	Portugal	26	26	21	56	16	30	19	41	9	11
30	Israel	28	24	36	12	39	39	65	11	64	30
31	Mexico	33	39	41	15	42	20	57	30	6	5
32	Qatar	27	27	34	13	78	33	52	22	72	77
33	Egypt	46	46	51	3	54	32	66	29	27	8
34	Turkey	35	35	40	19	63	29	69	14	21	9
35	Saudi Arabia	39	29	33	10	67	35	77	9	75	55
36	Malaysia	31	33	28	26	52	38	11	38	25	34
37	Indonesia	41	43	35	27	48	40	22	37	32	26
38	Morocco	52	62	47	14	58	36	31	58	24	17
39	Costa Rica	44	61	45	31	36	37	16	70	10	50

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40	Vietnam	50	44	32	23	73	49	21	25	40	25
41	South Africa	37	38	63	25	35	41	63	28	30	24
42	Argentina	29	41	59	41	28	34	73	48	11	19
43	Poland	38	30	25	73	22	45	41	50	45	32
44	Philippines	45	42	39	37	50	42	25	44	17	40
45	Czechia	34	31	27	69	23	56	54	66	48	45
46	Croatia	40	40	37	61	27	44	37	73	35	41
47	Sri Lanka	71	65	58	22	64	48	20	56	43	47
48	Hungary	43	34	30	64	24	57	53	68	46	39
49	Chile	42	49	43	49	41	50	38	57	33	37
50	Peru	61	66	57	32	46	47	44	65	34	20
51	Panama	57	52	62	57	47	52	2	61	39	58
52	Dominican Republic	59	73	53	48	44	46	24	67	16	61
53	Kenya	66	70	69	28	49	53	47	59	44	54
54	Colombia	48	58	60	50	45	43	71	51	29	46
55	Cambodia	77	69	49	35	74	58	32	53	56	48
56	Jordan	63	63	68	36	62	51	61	46	65	44
57	Estonia	51	45	48	72	26	73	35	78	66	69
58	Myanmar	75	74	67	30	72	67	49	54	69	62
59	Uruguay	47	60	55	66	37	62	46	72	50	60
60	Slovenia	49	54	54	74	32	66	29	77	60	65
61	Bulgaria	56	47	42	71	31	64	58	74	58	57
62	Slovakia	53	53	46	77	33	65	33	71	62	64
63	Romania	62	50	44	68	40	55	59	69	54	49
64	Latvia	55	55	50	78	30	77	36	76	68	72
65	Tunisia	69	67	66	54	75	54	48	62	49	52
66	Azerbaijan	60	71	73	43	56	68	67	47	73	73
67	Lithuania	58	48	56	76	38	78	42	75	70	70
68	Ecuador	65	72	65	62	57	60	50	64	42	59
69	Guatemala	72	77	64	55	61	70	40	63	59	67
70	Oman	67	56	70	52	70	59	60	52	77	78
71	Ukraine	54	51	61	67	51	63	75	33	57	63
72	Kazakhstan	70	75	71	47	69	76	72	40	76	76
73	Uzbekistan	76	76	76	51	65	74	64	42	74	75
74	Lebanon	73	64	77	60	71	61	70	39	71	56
75	Belarus	64	57	72	65	59	72	74	36	63	71
76	Serbia	68	59	74	75	55	75	62	55	67	66
77	El Salvador	74	78	75	70	66	71	56	60	61	74
78	Iraq	78	68	78	63	77	69	76	21	78	68

Methodology

Here's a look at the global perception data behind our rankings.

Behind a country's wealth and success are the policies that create possibilities, the people that drive the effort and the history that shapes the environment and perspective.

Globalization has expanded a country's presence beyond its physical borders, and the [U.S. News Best Countries rankings](#) – now in their sixth year – seek to examine a nation's worth beyond hard metrics.

The [2021 Best Countries report and rankings](#) are based on how global perceptions define countries in terms of a number of qualitative characteristics, impressions that have the potential to drive trade, travel and investment and directly affect national economies. The report covers perceptions of 78 nations.

Ranking the Countries

The study and model used to score and rank countries were developed by BAV Group and The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, specifically Professor David Reibstein, in consultation with U.S. News & World Report.

A set of 76 country attributes – terms that can be used to describe a country and that are also relevant to the success of a modern nation – were identified. Attributes by nation were presented in a survey of more than 17,000 people from across the globe. Participants assessed how closely they associated an attribute with a nation.

Each country was [scored on each of the 76 country attributes](#) based on a collection of individual survey responses. The more a country was perceived to exemplify a certain characteristic in relation to the average, the higher that country's attribute score and vice versa. These scores were normalized to account for outliers and transformed into a scale that could be compared across the board.

Attributes were grouped into 10 subrankings that rolled into the Best Countries ranking: Adventure, Agility, Cultural Influence, Entrepreneurship, Heritage, Movers, Open for Business, Power, Social Purpose and Quality of Life. And to reflect a world transformed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the ensuing sharp economic downturn and calls worldwide for social justice and tackling inequality, two new subrankings were introduced: Agility and Social Purpose. Two new attributes – survey respondents' views on how adaptable and responsive countries are – were added to existing attributes to help create the Agility subranking. The Social Purpose subranking replaces the previous Citizenship subranking and incorporates four new metrics – racial equity, cares about animal rights, committed to climate goals and committed to social justice – that join the earlier metrics.

These thematic subrankings were formed by grouping country attributes that had similar global trends in survey responses. Subranking scores for each country were

determined by averaging the scores that country received in each of the attributes comprising that subranking.

To determine the weight each subranking score had in the overall Best Countries score, each was correlated to 2019 gross domestic product at purchasing power parity per capita – a measure of inclusive prosperity – as reported by the International Monetary Fund. Subrankings that demonstrated a stronger relationship with the wealth category were weighted more heavily, and all weights were standardized to total 100.

The Movers subranking represents a version of BAV's BrandAsset Valuator Model of Brand Building, a metric developed by BAV that is predictive of a country's future growth in terms of gross domestic product at purchasing power parity. Instead of one year of data, it was correlated to projected growth through 2024.

The subrankings, their weights in calculating the overall ranking score and the country attributes factored into each are below. The country attribute scores were equally weighted within each subranking. Subranking weights differ slightly from previous years, as they are tied to more recent gross domestic product data. They may not add up to precisely 100 due to rounding.

Agility (14.18%): adaptable, dynamic, modern, progressive, responsive.

Entrepreneurship (14.16%): connected to the rest of the world, educated population, entrepreneurial, innovative, provides easy access to capital, skilled labor force, technological expertise, transparent business practices, well-developed infrastructure,

well-connected digital infrastructure, well-developed legal framework.

Quality of Life (13.88%): a good job market, affordable, economically stable, family friendly, income equality, politically stable, safe, well-developed public education system, well-developed public health system.

Movers (13.87%): different, distinctive, dynamic, unique.

Social Purpose (12.23%): cares about human rights, cares about the environment, gender equality, religious freedom, respects property rights, trustworthy, well-distributed political power, racial equity, cares about animal rights, committed to climate goals, committed to social justice.

Cultural Influence (10.45%): culturally significant in terms of entertainment, fashionable, happy, has an influential culture, has strong consumer brands, modern, prestigious, trendy.

Open for Business (9.42%): cheap manufacturing costs, favorable tax environment, not bureaucratic, not corrupt, transparent government practices.

Power (6.09%): a leader, economically influential, has strong exports, politically influential, strong international alliances, and a strong military.

Adventure (3.79%): friendly, fun, good for tourism, pleasant climate, scenic, sexy.

Heritage (1.93%): culturally accessible, has a rich history, has great food, many cultural attractions, many geographical attractions.

To arrive at a country's rank, we first calculated its standardized scores for each of the 76 country attributes. Each country received 10 subranking scores by averaging its scores for the country attributes grouped into that subranking. A country's overall score reflects the weighted sum of its subranking scores. The subranking and overall scores were rescaled so that the top country in each sub-category received a value of 100, and others were calculated as a proportion of that top score. Scores were ranked in descending order.

Additional lists rank the countries on more specific topics, such as the [Best Countries for Women](#), the [Best Countries to Raise Kids](#), the [Best Countries for Green Living](#) and the [Best Countries for Education](#).

Groups of relevant country attribute data were used to score and rank countries for these lists, but they do not affect the overall Best Countries score or ranking.

Choosing Survey Participants

To understand how countries are perceived, we endeavored to survey engaged citizens who are broadly representative of the global population, with an emphasis on those who would deem the topic and findings most relevant to their lives.

Self-identification in demographic questions distinguished respondents into three defined groups: informed elites – college-educated individuals who consider themselves middle class or higher and who read or watch the news at least four days a week; business decision-makers – senior leaders in an organization or small business owners who employ others; and general public – adults at least 18 years old who were nationally representative of

their country in terms of age and gender.

Individuals who were likely to fit these descriptions were targeted and sent the link to an online survey through Lightspeed GMI, a global market research and data collection firm. We aimed to gather an equal share of responses from each type of citizen.

A total of 17,326 individuals from 36 countries in four regions – the Americas, Asia, Europe and the Middle East & Africa – were surveyed. Of the respondents, 10,068 were informed elites, 4,919 were business decision-makers and 5,817 were considered general public. Some respondents were considered both informed elites and business decision-makers.

Regardless of demographics or participant type, each individual's responses weighed equally in the results.

Data Source: About the Survey

Survey participants were given a random subset of countries and country attributes to consider. The combinations were presented in a grid form where participants were prompted to check off the characteristics they associated with each country. If a participant indicated that they were not familiar with a country, it was removed from their survey.

Each participant considered about half of the country attributes for about a third of the countries. In this way, each attribute and country pair was reviewed at least 380 times by each of the three types of survey participants in each of the four regions. The more times an attribute-country pair was checked off in the grid, the higher the attribute score was for that

country.

In addition to considering countries in terms of attributes, each survey participant was asked to respond to a set of questions that gauge perceptions of the state of the world today on a variety of topics including the economy, the environment, leadership and technology.

A set of standard demographic questions helped to screen for global diversity and equal weight among participant groups.

Choosing the Countries to Rank

We narrowed the world's nations down to a statistically manageable group by comparing the performance of countries in a number of key business, economic and quality-of-life indicators.

The 78 countries in the 2021 Best Countries rankings had to meet four criteria within the most recent year for which data are available specific to each benchmark to be included in the study:

- Top 100 countries in terms of gross domestic product in 2018 or 2019, based on World Bank data
- Top 100 countries in terms of foreign direct investment inflows in 2018 or 2019, based on World Bank data
- Top 100 countries in terms of international tourism receipts in 2018 or 2019, based on World Bank data
- Top 150 countries in the U.N.'s Human Development Index, based on the 2018 or 2019 report

Those that did not reach all four of these benchmarks and those that did not report these statistics were not included. Reflective of global trends captured in the most recently available benchmark data, three countries that were ranked last year failed to meet all four benchmarks this year and have therefore dropped out of the rankings: Bolivia, Ghana and Luxembourg. Similarly, eight countries have been added back into the analysis: Belgium, Cambodia, El Salvador, Hungary, Iraq, Ireland, Uruguay and Uzbekistan.

Collectively, the 78 countries in the report account for about 94% of global gross domestic product and represent about three-quarters of the world's population. They span the globe, covering Africa, Asia, Central America, Eurasia, Europe, the Middle East, North America, Oceania and South America.

Best Countries first launched in 2016 based on a model of a country's brand evaluation created by BAV Consulting former CEO John Gerzema and Professor David Reibstein, tested by former BAV Group Senior Vice President Anna Blender and validated by WPP Senior Advisor David Sable.

Methodology FAQ

What's different about this year's Best Countries report?

The Best Countries rankings are based largely on perception, and countries are assessed on the same set of 76 country attributes each year. However, the four benchmarks used to determine the set

of countries that are assessed each year are driven by hard data. Incorporating the most recently available data for these benchmarks – gross domestic product, foreign direct investment inflows, international tourism receipts and the U.N.'s Human Development Index – changes the set of countries that meet the four benchmarks needed to be included in the analysis annually. This year, eight countries were added back into the analysis, while three other countries did not make the cut.

Some of the country attributes reflect more unfavorable aspects of a country. Could high scores on these attributes help raise a country's score or rank?

Scores for the negative country attributes – bureaucratic and corrupt – were inverted when calculated into the subranking and overall scores. In this way, the countries that were the most closely associated with these attributes performed worse.

Were there ties?

No, scores were calculated in relation to each other in a way that did not allow for ties.

Could survey participants answer about their country of residence or citizenship?

Yes. Survey participants could answer about any country that was randomly assigned to them as long as they indicated that they were familiar with that country.

The survey refers to 76 country attributes, but there are not that many listed.

Eight country attributes were not included in any of the subrankings and therefore do not factor into the overall Best Countries score or rank. These data may be used in additional analysis.

This methodology mentions a group of 78 countries and a group of 36 countries. What's the difference?

Seventy-eight countries were reviewed in a survey to create these rankings. People from 36 countries answered that survey. In many cases, countries overlapped, but the survey was fielded in some countries that were not ranked and vice versa.

Why are a few rankings missing some countries?

In the [Best Countries to Study Abroad](#), [Best Countries to Invest In](#) and [Best Countries to Start a Career](#), we thought it was best to compare survey responses between two types of participants. Countries with low initial scores were excluded from the list as the comparison would create misleading results. Neither of these lists affects the overall Best Countries scores or ranking.

Where can I learn more about the study and the model?

See the answers to some [frequently asked questions here](#), and contact pr@usnews.com to reach U.S. News. Our partners advise governments, corporations and nongovernmental organizations on nation branding, including bespoke country analysis and other reports. Professor David Reibstein can be reached at reibstein@wharton.upenn.edu. For more information see www.bavgroup.com.

FAQ

What is Best Countries?

[Best Countries](#) is a dynamic multimedia portal that includes rankings, video content, interactive data visualization tools, original reporting from journalists and op-eds from international thought leaders. The content leverages data derived from a proprietary survey produced in partnership between [U.S. News & World Report](#), [BAV Group](#) and the [Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania](#), specifically professor David J. Reibstein.

The 2021 Best Countries rankings include an overall list of 78 nations numerically ranked as well as 10 subrankings: [Agility](#), [Social Purpose](#), [Cultural Influence](#), [Entrepreneurship](#), [Quality of Life](#), [Power](#), [Heritage](#), [Open for Business](#), [Movers](#) and [Adventure](#).

Additional featured rankings were produced, including the countries that are best to [headquarter a corporation](#), [raise a family](#), receive an [education](#) and more.

Why rank countries?

The Best Countries project is designed to help citizens, business leaders and policymakers better understand how their nations and others are perceived on a world scale.

As a growing number of businesses and people have the ability to choose where in the world to invest their time and money, it has become increasingly valuable to understand how a nation's policies,

politics and products affect its perceived standing in the world. Perceptions have an impact on the willingness of people to invest in, conduct trade in and travel to nations, thereby having a direct impact on national economies.

The data behind the rankings can help determine the current and future possibilities of economic, political and cultural success in a nation and can be used as a strategic decision-making tool for citizens, business leaders and governments to better evaluate their countries.

The rankings are the centerpiece of the Best Countries portal that combines daily journalism, analyses and commentaries from journalists, as well as experts in government, business and academia to offer a range of perspectives on global issues, including foreign policy, immigration, human rights, security and more.

How is this different from existing country rankings?

Best Countries was produced using a proprietary survey and methodology developed in partnership with U.S. News, BAV Group and the Wharton School. It is the only study of this magnitude to evaluate how perceptions about countries impact a nation's economy.

The Best Countries rankings are based on 76 metrics, making it the most comprehensive global evaluation of

nations to date. The breadth and depth of the proprietary survey uncovers exclusive trends and correlations that tell new stories about nations.

The methodology was inspired by BAV's [BrandAsset® Valuator](#) Model of Brand Equity, the world's largest database of consumer perceptions of brands and the largest and longest running study of brands, uniquely tying the Best Countries rankings to a proven model of measuring perceptions.

What role did each partner play in producing Best Countries?

U.S. News, the global authority in rankings, news and analysis, designed and hosts the online platform. It leads the daily editorial direction of [the website](#).

BAV Group led market research for 2021 Best Countries, using their proprietary [BrandAsset® Valuator](#), the world's largest brand management tool and database of consumer perceptions of brands.

Marketing professor David Reibstein of Penn's Wharton School oversaw the methodology's development.

All three partners were involved in producing the proprietary survey and methodology used in the global study.

How were the countries ranked?

Seventy-eight nations were ranked using data fielded from a proprietary perception survey developed by U.S. News, BAV Group and the Wharton School.

Perception data were derived from a survey of 17,326 respondents – including

members of the general population, informed elites and business decision makers – across 36 countries in four regions: the Americas, Europe and the Middle East, Africa and Asia. The surveys were conducted online.

Respondents were asked to share their perceptions of 78 nations in terms of specific country characteristics, or attributes. These attributes were scored individually and separated into 10 thematic groupings that had similar trends in survey responses.

The relative importance, or weight, given to each of the 10 subrankings was based on the magnitude of that subranking's correlation with gross domestic product per capita purchasing power and rolled into one overall Best Countries ranking.

See the [methodology](#) for more details.

How were the 78 countries chosen?

Collectively, the 78 nations represented in the 2021 Best Countries rankings account for nearly 94% of global gross domestic product (GDP) and represent about three-quarters of the world's population.

These countries were selected based on composite performance in key business, economic and quality of life data. Nations included in the 2021 rankings had to meet four benchmarks within the most recent year for which data are available – either 2018 or 2019:

- Top 100 countries in terms of GDP, based on International Monetary Fund data.
- Top 100 countries in terms of

foreign direct investment inflows, based on World Bank data.

- Top 150 countries in the U.N.'s Human Development Index.
- Top 100 countries in terms of international tourism receipts, based on World Bank data.

See the [methodology](#) for more details.

Are the rankings objective?

To ensure the objectivity of the ranking methodology, each of the subranking variables was weighted based on its correlation with the GDP per capita purchasing power. Variables with higher correlations to GDP per capita purchasing power were weighted more heavily.

To keep the rankings comparable, the Best Countries ranking only included nations that reached benchmarks on four composite performance rankings: the Top 150 Countries in the U.N.'s Human Development Index, the World Bank's Top 100 countries in terms of foreign direct investment inflows, the World Bank's Top 100 Countries in terms of GDP and the World Bank's top 100 countries in terms of international tourism receipts.

To make the rankings comprehensive, perception data were derived from a survey of more than 17,000 respondents – including the general population, informed elites and business decision makers – across 36 countries in four regions: the Americas, Europe and the Middle East, Africa and Asia.

What's different about this year's Best Countries report?

The Best Countries rankings are based largely on perception, and countries are assessed on the same set of 76 country attributes, an increase of 11 attributes from previous years to reflect how the COVID-19 pandemic, economic downturns and intensified calls for social justice have echoed around the world. However, the four benchmarks used to determine the set of countries that are assessed each year are driven by hard data. Incorporating the most recently available data for these benchmarks – gross domestic product, foreign direct investment inflows, international tourism receipts and the U.N.'s Human Development Index – changes the set of countries that meet the four benchmarks needed to be included in the analysis annually. This year, eight countries – Belgium, Cambodia, El Salvador, Hungary, Iraq, Ireland, Uruguay and Uzbekistan – were added back into the analysis, while three other countries did not make the cut: Bolivia, Ghana and Luxembourg.

Whom should I email with questions?

For questions about Best Countries, please email pr@usnews.com.