



Best Countries 2018

Global rankings, international news and data insights



Overall Rankings

Overall Rank	Country	Entrepreneurship	Adventure	Citizenship	Cultural Influence	Heritage	Movers	Open for Business	Power	Quality of Life
1	Switzerland	5	17	2	7	27	28	2	17	6
2	Canada	7	18	4	11	40	32	7	12	1
3	Germany	1	58	10	14	21	35	19	4	10
4	United Kingdom	4	40	11	5	11	51	20	5	13
5	Japan	2	38	19	6	12	5	26	7	14
6	Sweden	6	20	5	10	37	42	5	19	3
7	Australia	13	11	8	9	28	22	14	16	5
8	United States	3	33	16	3	22	29	43	1	17
9	France	14	14	14	2	4	47	27	6	16
10	Netherlands	9	15	7	12	24	53	9	21	8
11	Denmark	11	35	3	16	39	58	4	27	2
12	Norway	10	26	1	22	44	37	8	26	4
13	New Zealand	19	7	9	18	43	11	10	35	9
14	Finland	15	30	6	25	49	38	6	42	7
15	Italy	21	2	20	1	1	30	45	18	22
16	Singapore	8	34	23	13	32	3	13	24	18
17	Austria	18	23	12	24	17	69	16	29	11
18	Luxembourg	17	45	13	27	51	67	1	31	12
19	Spain	22	3	17	4	2	49	32	23	19
20	China	16	57	38	21	10	4	33	3	21
21	Ireland	20	13	15	28	20	48	11	37	15
22	South Korea	12	62	26	30	48	15	25	11	24
23	United Arab Emirates	23	67	30	17	67	1	67	10	25
24	Portugal	26	10	18	26	9	71	24	38	20
25	India	28	37	51	29	6	2	29	15	32

Overall Rankings

Overall Rank	Country	Entrepreneurship	Adventure	Citizenship	Cultural Influence	Heritage	Movers	Open for Business	Power	Quality of Life
26	Russia	24	56	39	23	16	8	80	2	38
27	Thailand	38	4	52	19	8	6	15	49	30
28	Greece	35	5	25	15	3	24	55	52	29
29	Brazil	37	1	31	8	14	9	60	30	52
30	Israel	25	70	33	40	29	10	64	8	35
31	Mexico	40	9	41	20	5	27	41	39	42
32	Poland	27	50	21	45	25	80	31	48	23
33	Czech Republic	29	44	22	46	31	75	40	69	26
34	Malaysia	34	29	54	44	36	20	12	59	28
35	Qatar	30	76	49	34	80	12	38	20	48
36	Turkey	36	27	58	31	7	25	77	14	46
37	Saudi Arabia	31	78	64	38	57	14	78	9	41
38	Hungary	32	48	24	49	23	79	30	73	27
39	South Africa	33	25	40	36	33	18	61	28	62
40	Argentina	39	8	28	32	18	46	68	53	56
41	Indonesia	43	31	62	43	30	23	22	47	34
42	Egypt	56	42	75	33	13	7	73	25	70
43	Peru	67	21	45	42	19	19	23	72	49
44	Vietnam	52	43	69	52	26	13	28	34	40
45	Costa Rica	62	6	42	39	52	40	17	77	47
46	Dominican Republic	66	12	43	37	55	44	18	74	45
47	Morocco	63	32	71	35	15	17	50	60	53
48	Panama	47	28	44	51	65	65	3	64	55
49	Philippines	45	16	55	41	47	34	34	55	37
50	Croatia	42	24	27	47	35	60	49	76	33

Overall Rankings

Overall Rank	Country	Entrepreneurship	Adventure	Citizenship	Cultural Influence	Heritage	Movers	Open for Business	Power	Quality of Life
51	Sri Lanka	59	39	61	53	46	16	21	67	54
52	Chile	49	22	37	48	34	56	37	68	43
53	Slovenia	41	55	32	67	59	74	35	80	36
54	Romania	44	46	35	56	38	78	51	71	39
55	Colombia	58	19	47	50	42	41	62	56	65
56	Bulgaria	53	54	36	70	53	76	36	75	31
57	Kenya	73	47	59	54	61	31	44	61	57
58	Uruguay	54	41	34	58	54	70	46	78	50
59	Latvia	50	60	29	72	71	68	48	79	44
60	Ecuador	60	36	50	61	60	54	39	70	59
61	Bahrain	46	75	65	55	78	45	47	43	61
62	Tanzania	80	53	63	59	74	26	52	62	69
63	Myanmar	75	61	77	66	62	21	65	50	58
64	Azerbaijan	64	66	60	74	63	33	56	45	67
65	Tunisia	69	52	76	60	50	62	53	66	51
66	Guatemala	77	49	57	68	66	61	42	65	68
67	Bolivia	78	51	56	69	69	52	54	58	63
68	Jordan	65	69	72	64	45	39	72	32	75
69	Ukraine	48	59	46	62	58	66	75	33	72
70	Kazakhstan	71	73	68	76	72	36	70	41	64
71	Ghana	74	68	67	73	77	55	57	63	66
72	Belarus	51	63	48	65	70	73	76	36	60
73	Oman	57	77	66	63	75	50	69	46	74
74	Pakistan	68	79	79	75	68	59	66	22	71
75	Lebanon	61	65	73	57	41	57	74	40	79

Overall Rankings

Overall Rank	Country	Entrepreneurship	Adventure	Citizenship	Cultural Influence	Heritage	Movers	Open for Business	Power	Quality of Life
76	Nigeria	70	71	78	71	76	63	59	44	77
77	Iran	72	80	80	78	56	43	79	13	80
78	Serbia	55	64	53	77	64	77	71	51	73
79	Angola	76	74	70	79	79	64	58	57	76
80	Algeria	79	72	74	80	73	72	63	54	78

How We Score

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 do not add up to precisely 100.00 due to rounding.

Adventure (3.24%): Friendly, fun, pleasant climate, scenic, sexy

Citizenship (16.95%): Cares about human rights, cares about the environment, gender equality, progressive, religious freedom, respects property rights, trustworthy, well-distributed political power

Cultural Influence (12.93%): Culturally significant in terms of entertainment, fashionable, happy, has an influential culture, modern, prestigious, trendy

Entrepreneurship (17.42%): 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-developed legal framework

Heritage (3.17%): Culturally accessible, has a rich history, has great food, many cultural attractions

Movers (10.00%): Different, distinctive, dynamic, unique

Open for Business (11.99%): Bureaucratic, cheap manufacturing costs, corrupt, favorable tax environment, transparent government practices

Power (7.42%): A leader, economically influential, politically influential, strong international alliances, strong military

Quality of Life (16.89%): A good job market, affordable, economically stable, family friendly, income equality, politically stable, safe, well-developed public education system, well-developed public health system

Methodology

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 2018 Best Countries rankings seek to understand a nation's worth beyond hard metrics.

The [2018 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. Eighty nations – up from 60 in the inaugural rankings – were measured in the report.

Ranking the Countries

U.S. News & World Report worked with partners at WPP's brand strategy firm BAV Consulting and The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania to identify a set of 65 country attributes - terms that could be used to describe a country and that are also relevant to the success of a modern nation. Attributes by nation were presented in a survey where participants assessed how closely they associated one with the other. The study and model was developed by John Gerzema, David Reibstein and Anna Blender.

Each country was [scored on each of the 65 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 nine subrankings that rolled into the Best Countries ranking: Adventure, Citizenship, Cultural Influence, Entrepreneurship, Heritage, Movers, Open for Business, Power and Quality of Life.

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

To determine the weight each subranking score had in the overall Best Countries score, each was correlated to 2014 gross domestic product purchasing power parity per capita, a measure of inclusive prosperity, as reported by the International Monetary Fund. More prevalent relationships that demonstrated an interconnectedness with the wealth metric were weighted more.

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 purchasing power parity per capita. Instead of one year of data, it was correlated to predicted growth of the metric from 2014 to 2020.

To arrive at a country's rank, we first calculated its standardized scores in each of the 65 country attributes. Each country received nine 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 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](#) 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 were 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 21,117 individuals from 36 countries in four regions - the Americas, Asia, Europe and the Middle East and Africa - were surveyed. Of the respondents, 6,016 were informed elites and 6,489 were business decision-makers. 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 270 times per constituency/region combination. 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 assess their randomly assigned subset of countries in additional engagement and intention metrics, including travel, doing business and general regard.

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 80 countries in the 2018 Best Countries rankings had to meet four benchmarks within the last two years for which data are available to be assessed in survey and included in the rankings:

1. Top 100 countries in terms of gross domestic product in 2015 or 2014, based on World Bank Data
2. Top 150 countries in the UN's Human Development Index, based on the 2015 or 2014 report
3. Top 100 countries in terms of foreign direct investment inflows in 2014 or 2013, based on United Nations data
4. Top 100 countries in terms of international tourism receipts in 2014 or international tourism arrivals in 2013, based on World Bank data

Those that did not reach all four of these benchmarks and those that did not report these statistics were not included.

Collectively, the 80 countries in the report account for about 95 percent of global gross domestic product and represent more than 80 percent 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.

Methodology FAQ

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 sub-ranking 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 did not indicate that they were not familiar with that country.

The survey refers to 65 country attributes, but there are not that many listed.

Correct. Eight country attributes were not included in any of the sub-rankings 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 80 countries and a group of 36 countries. What's the difference?

Eighty 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 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 affect 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 NGO's on nation branding including bespoke country analysis and other reports. Professor David Reibstein can be reached at reibstein@wharton.upenn.edu. John Gerzema is at jgerzema@bavconsulting.com and Anna Blender is at ablender@bavconsulting.com. For more information see <http://bavconsulting.com/nationbranding>.

FAQ

What is Best Countries?

Best Countries is a dynamic, multimedia portal that includes rankings, video content, interactive data visualization tools, original reporting and op-eds from international thought leaders. The content leverages data derived from a proprietary survey produced in partnership with [U.S. News & World Report](#), [Y&R's BAV Consulting](#) and the [Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania](#).

The 2018 Best Countries rankings include an overall list of 80 nations numerically ranked – up from 60 in the inaugural edition – as well as nine subrankings: [Citizenship](#), [Cultural Influence](#), [Entrepreneurship](#), [Quality of Life](#), [Power](#), [Heritage](#), [Open for Business](#), [Movers](#) and [Adventure](#).

Additional “Best of” lists were produced, including the countries that are best to [headquarter a corporation](#), [raise a family](#), [receive an education](#), [invest in](#), and more.

Why rank countries?

The Best Countries project is designed to help citizens, business leaders and policymakers better understand how their nations 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, op-eds and video content from experts in government, business and academia to offer a range of perspectives and analysis 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](#), [Y&R's BAV Consulting](#) 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 75 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 Y&R's BrandAsset® Valuator Model of Brand Equity, the world's 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 Consulting, a subsidiary of Y&R – one of the world's leading and most iconic marketing companies – led market research for 2018 Best Countries, using their proprietary BrandAsset® Valuator, the world's largest brand management tool and database of consumer perceptions of brands.

The Wharton School's SEI Center for Advanced Studies in Management, one of the world's first think tanks for management education, 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?

New this year, the Best Countries rankings have been expanded to evaluate 80 countries – up from 60 last year. Nations were ranked using data fielded from a proprietary perception survey developed by U.S. News, BAV Consulting and the Wharton School.

Perception data were derived from a survey of more than 21,000 respondents – general population, informed elites and business decision makers – across 36 countries in four regions: the Americas, Europe, Middle East, Africa and Asia. The surveys were conducted using Y&R's proprietary [BrandAsset Valuator®](#), the world's largest database of consumer perceptions of brands.

Respondents were asked to share their perceptions of 80 nations in terms of specific country characteristics, or attributes. These attributes were scored individually and separated into nine thematic groupings that had similar trends in survey responses.

The relative importance, or weight, given to each of the nine 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 80 countries chosen?

Collectively, the 80 nations represented in the 2018 Best Countries rankings account for nearly 95 percent of global gross domestic product and represent more than 80 percent 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 2018 rankings had to meet four benchmarks within the last two years for which data are available:

- Top 100 countries in terms of gross domestic product in 2014 or 2013, based on World Bank data.
- Top 100 countries in terms of foreign direct investment inflows in 2014 or 2013, based on United Nations data.
- Top 150 countries in the UN's Human Development Index, based on the 2015 or 2014 report.
- Top 100 countries in terms of international tourism receipts in 2014 or international tourism arrivals in 2013, based on World Bank data.

This is a change from the 2016 edition in which countries were required to reach the benchmark in the single most recent year for which data were available to be included in the ranking.

In future reports, the aim is to expand the

Best Countries rankings in ways that will make the methodology as comprehensive as possible. 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 gross domestic product per capita purchasing power. Variables with higher correlations to gross domestic product 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 United Nation's Top 100 countries in terms of foreign direct investment inflows, the Top 150 Countries in the UN's Human Development Index, the World Bank's Top 100 Countries in terms of GDP and the World Bank's top 100 countries in terms of international tourism.

To make the rankings comprehensive, perception data were derived from a survey of more than 21,000 respondents – including the general population, informed elites and business decision makers – across 36 countries in four regions: the Americas, Europe, Middle East, Africa and Asia.

Who should I email with questions?

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