

Investment Migration Can Overcome Gaps in Global Mobility and Resourcing

International travel is slowly making a comeback and we are seeing a gradual easing of travel restrictions, yet there are still significant obstacles to international mobility, and this may be the case for some time — particularly for travelers from the global south.



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Results from the recently released [Henley Passport Index](#) indicate that pandemic-related barriers to entry have created the widest global mobility gap since the index was first created 16 years ago and worryingly, there are indications that even as the pandemic wanes, these restrictive policies may be retained or entrenched in an effort to curb and contain mobility from the global south to the global north.

Asian countries continue to dominate the top spots when it comes to passport power, with Japan and Singapore sharing the highest ranking, enjoying visa-free or with a visa-on-arrival access to 192 of 227 possible travel destinations. South Korea is not far behind in joint-2nd place with Germany, with a score of 190. In stark contrast, at the bottom end of the index, Afghan nationals only have access to 26 countries without requiring a visa in advance.

Highest ranking nations have the harshest travel restrictions

Using authoritative data from the [International Air Transport Association \(IATA\)](#) and enhanced by expert insights, the research indicates that global mobility discrepancies are on the rise. Among the trends highlighted in Henley & Partners' [Global Mobility Report 2021 Q4](#) are that many of the countries with the highest-ranking passports, mostly in the global north, have been the nations responsible for enforcing the strictest inbound Covid-19 travel restrictions. Meanwhile countries at the lower end of the index have actively been relaxing their borders in efforts to revive their economies, but their openness has been slow to be reciprocated.

Although Japan enjoys joint top spot on the [Henley Passport Index](#), making its passport one of the most beneficial in the world in terms of global mobility, it has imposed some of the most stringent Covid-19 travel restrictions in 2021. Its borders remain closed to international tourists with no signs that they will be opening up in the near future. Similarly, Germany, sharing joint-2nd place with South Korea, with a score of 190, prevented entry to visitors from over 100 countries at the time the Q4 index research was conducted in early October. By way of contrast, Egypt,



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with a much lower passport ranking of 97, has no travel restrictions in place, yet passport holders can access only 51 countries without a prior visa. Kenya, ranked 77th, also has no inbound travel limitations, yet its citizens can access only 72 destinations without a prearranged visa.

Are Covid-19 restrictions used to contain movement from the global south?

Mobility experts featured in Henley & Partners' [Global Mobility Report 2021 Q4](#) suggest that we could see a further widening of the global mobility divide between advanced and developing economies as pandemic-related restrictions become entrenched. [Prof. Mehari Taddele Maru](#), a Fellow at the United Nations University Institute on Comparative Regional Integration Studies, notes that the global north has for some time enforced harsh migration containment strategies through rigid border controls and suggests that the Covid-19 travel restrictions initially introduced to manage the pandemic have become useful migration containment instruments that could continue to be used as a method to curb visitors from the global south.

The UK and the USA, which share the 7th place on the index, with a visa-free score of 185, have both been slow to address the growing inequalities in travel freedom



and access. The UK's 'red list', which enforces prohibitively expensive tests and quarantine requirements, was reduced to seven countries only in early October. All seven are in the global south — in South America and Latin America. But as [Dr. Hannah White OBE](#), Deputy Director of the Institute for Government notes, restrictions to international movement are likely to continue to affect travelers to and from the UK well into 2022.

The USA has delivered convoluted and ever-changing travel restrictions, although finally announcing in late September that it would ease travel restrictions on all fully vaccinated foreign visitors from November. In mid-October this was extended to include allowing fully vaccinated visitors from Canada and Mexico traveling for non-essential reasons to cross US land borders.

Although the EU bloc collectively reopened its borders to American tourists for the northern hemisphere summer peak season, there was no reciprocity from the Biden administration, leading to the EU ultimately voting to remove America from its 'safe list'. As Greg Lindsay, Director of Applied Research at NewCities, observes, passports once thought to be universally prized for ease of travel are again in flux due to rising covid case counts and shifting politics.

Expect persistent barriers to movement

Though many countries in the global north have suffered significantly under Covid-19, countries with passports ranking low on the index are likely to face further challenges caused by the pandemic's long-term impact on global mobility. Even as many countries reopen their borders to revive tourism and stimulate their bruised economies, their citizens regularly face strict quarantine requirements whether they are

vaccinated or not, barring them from access to the rest of the world.

[Erol Yayboke](#), senior fellow with the International Security Program and director of the Project on Fragility and Mobility at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, DC, explains that Covid-19 is both an economic and public health crisis, and in both respects the pandemic disproportionately negatively affects migration origin countries. In months and years to come, environmental crises and conflicts could see more people needing to move in order to survive. However, they are likely to be met with enduring pandemic-related barriers to movement. This could be due to the virus itself lingering but might also be because some leaders seem reluctant to surrender their increased control over migration.

Ensuring access to the best vaccinations and healthcare

The value of a passport that ranks highly on the [Henley Passport Index](#) is clear, yet it is no longer the only factor determining global mobility. As [Kevin Bürchler](#) of Swiss Insurance Partners points out, your health or vaccination status, sometimes in combination with additional passports, may be even more significant for your global access rights than your primary passport is. A global vaccine hierarchy is emerging, which means having access to vaccinations with the widest approval and acceptance rates — currently AstraZeneca and Pfizer — is key to ensure travel freedom.

While many European [countries with popular investment migration programs](#) such as [Malta](#), [Portugal](#), [Spain](#), and [the UK](#) provide residents with access to four different vaccines, some of the smaller island nations have approved only one or two. The emerging vaccine hierarchy is likely to affect perceptions of the value of

residence and citizenship in particular countries and uncertainties related to movement across borders and future pandemic restrictions could lead to increased international relocation by those who are able to move.

Access to stable and high-quality healthcare systems in countries that offer globally preferred vaccines is now a key priority. In the new reality of restricted mobility for multiple reasons high net worth individuals are particularly recognizing the value of [dual citizenship](#) and having a range of residence options. Permanently relocating one's country of residence can ease mobility and facilitate access to better healthcare.

Investment migration can counter global imbalances

Repeated economic crises, alarming climate change emergencies, political instability, and economic volatility are global issues that affect rich and poor countries alike and compel vast numbers of people to relocate in search of a better quality of life, stability, and security.

In his latest publication [MOVE: The Forces Uprooting Us](#), FutureMap founder Dr. Parag Khanna, identifies this momentum as an important trend in the years ahead, stating that the decades to come will see constant circulation as we attempt to correct “the grave mismatch among resources, borders, industries, and people”.

Investment migration programs, with their concomitant additional [citizenship](#) or alternative [residence](#) options — or both — provide the protection needed in an increasingly volatile and uncertain world. As [Dr. Christian H. Kaelin](#), Chairman of Henley & Partners points out, heightened, better managed global migration is the appropriate route for humanity to take in these troubled times. High-net-worth individuals, investors, entrepreneurs, as well as governments and charities should attend to their interests. In doing so, they could be contributing towards the solution of one of the century's most pressing conundrums. ■

