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## Switzerland ranked first in 2017 Best Countries report



**Switzerland is viewed as the No. 1 overall country**, according to the 2017 Best Countries report, a joint rankings and analysis project from U.S. News & World Report, Y&R's BAV Consulting and the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania.

People regard the European country highly for its citizenship, being open for business, an environment that encourages entrepreneurship, the quality of life it provides its citizens and for its cultural influence. **The rankings evaluate 80 countries** — up from 60 last year — across a range of criteria, from power and economic influence to citizenship and quality of life, to capture how nations are perceived on a global scale.

**Canada finished No. 2 overall and the United Kingdom No. 3**, as both did last year. Germany fell from its top spot in 2016 to No. 4 this year, while Japan moved up two positions to No. 5 overall.

The United States fell as many positions as Germany in the rankings, dropping to No. 7 overall, behind Sweden.

**The U.S. is still seen as the world's most powerful country**, but the gap between it and second-place Russia, which American intelligence officials say interfered with the presidential election in an effort to help Trump, has narrowed to a near-negligible difference in that area.

"We wanted to capture how tumultuous political change can affect a country's perceived standing in the world," said Brian Kelly, editor and chief content officer of U.S. News. "Similar to what we have done with hospitals, universities and other institutions, the Best Countries portal pairs fact-based metrics with storytelling to help citizens, business leaders and governments better evaluate their countries and make sense of a range of important global issues."

Meanwhile, Switzerland, the world's oldest neutral country, appears to offer a respite from a liberal Western-led political order upended by populist sentiments and strongman politics. **The small Alpine country has preserved its place on the world stage by presenting itself as a sanctuary for calm reason.**

The Swiss quietly voted in February to streamline citizenship for third-generation immigrants. At a time when Trump speaks of border walls, **the Swiss rejected the anti-immigrant sentiment** that has stoked anger and propelled populist politics in the U.S. and across Europe.

Among key findings, Switzerland is the best to headquarter a corporation, and **New Zealand is the best for retirement**. Panama is the most business-friendly nation, while Canada takes the top spots for education and quality of life. Italy again ranks as the nation with the richest tradition and Brazil is the No. 1 country to visit.

The 2017 Best Countries ranking methodology relies on data gathered from a proprietary perception survey — conducted after the U.S. presidential election — of 21,372 individuals from 36 countries in four regions, the Americas, Asia, Europe and the Middle East and Africa, who gave their opinions through an online survey system. The published methodology notes that of this number, 12,396 were considered "informed elites" — meaning they were college-educated, middle- or upper-class individuals — and 6,489 were business decision-makers. The rest

belonged to the general public.

## **2017 Best Countries Rankings**

- 1 - Switzerland
- 2 - Canada
- 3 - United Kingdom
- 4 - Germany
- 5 - Japan
- 6 - Sweden
- 7 - United States
- 8 - Australia
- 9 - France
- 10 - Norway