



MEDIA RELEASE

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Senior talent prioritize pay over cultural fit in unpredictable geopolitical climate, finds 2025 IMD World Talent Ranking

Lausanne, Tuesday 9 September 2025 – Executives motivated to relocate for work are being driven by global uncertainty, with major implications for companies and economies, the [2025 IMD World Talent Ranking](#) finds. Financial security and tangible benefits are now most frequently cited as decisive relocation drivers, contrasting with the pre-COVID-19 pandemic era, when quality of life, cultural fit, and language ranked higher.

The Ranking assesses 69 economies' capacity to develop, attract, and retain the human capital required to sustain growth using a mixture of statistical data and survey responses from 6,162 executives.

This shift is most pronounced in **Jordan (46th)**, **Ireland (14th)**, and **the Korean Republic (37th)**, but spans economies of different sizes and with varying degrees of prosperity globally.

The Ranking's authors – researchers at the [IMD World Competitiveness Center \(WCC\)](#) – say it is the result of a perfect storm of crises, ranging from the wars in Europe and the Middle East, an acceleration in inflation, and rising food and energy prices.

Younger executives under 40, who have lived through two recessions in their careers, are more financially cautious and less willing to gamble on international moves without a guaranteed financial reward.

"Talent competitiveness remains a highly dynamic and evolving field where sustained leadership demands continuous policy innovation, responsiveness to shifting workforce needs, and the ability to balance long-term investment with short-term adaptability," said **José Caballero, WCC Senior Economist**.



Overall, **Switzerland** maintained its first-place position, **Luxembourg** reclaimed its second place, and **Iceland** rose from sixth to third. **Hong Kong SAR** rose five positions to take fourth, its highest ever position.

The **UAE (9th)** made the top 10 for the first time. Its recent upward trend signals rapid improvements in talent-focused policies, infrastructure, and international attractiveness.

Singapore (7th) has fallen five places in a year, the executives surveyed rate the level of skills developed in primary and secondary education highly and 36% of university graduates specialize in the sciences. Its investment and development score lets it down.

The **UAE** and **Hong Kong** both attract large numbers of inbound students from abroad and distinguish themselves through a highly competitive private sector and outstanding academic achievement, respectively.

According to findings, international student mobility is the foundation of future talent strategies and countries like **Canada (11th)** and **Germany (13th)** are not only attracting foreign students, but successfully integrating them into their labor markets, building long-term pipelines of skilled talent.

The report also says efficiency matters as much as investment: economies like **Kazakhstan (34th)**, **Latvia (21st)**, and **Estonia (18th)** demonstrate that strategic use of limited education budgets can outperform more generously funded, but less effective systems.

The IMD World Talent Ranking evaluates countries across three pillars — Investment & Development, Appeal, and Readiness — using a blend of statistical data and IMD's Executive Opinion Survey. The 2025 edition covers 69 economies. Full methodology and data tables are available [here](#).

The WCC will publish the [Hinrich-IMD Sustainable Trade Index](#) on 14 October 2025 and the [IMD World Digital Competitiveness Ranking](#) on 4 November 2025.

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