

# The Passport Index: Papers, Please! [B2]

L'indice Henley Passport è una classifica globale dei paesi in base alla capacità dei loro cittadini di viaggiare verso altre destinazioni. Un indicatore geopolitico che rivela molto sullo stato del mondo.

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How powerful is your passport? According to the Henley Passport Index, if you are Spanish or Italian you hold the third most powerful passport in the world. Yes, your **burgundy-coloured** EU passport is greater than a navy blue British passport (ranked 5th) or a US passport (ranked 9th.) But the small nation of Singapore **holds** the world's most powerful passport, **granting** visa-free access to 195 out of 227 global destinations.

## POWER TO MOVE

Passport indexes rank countries based on the travel freedom their passports offer. There is more than one index: check out [passportindex.org](http://passportindex.org), for example, which has an attractive interactive website and app! However, the Henley Passport Index is considered the most accurate; since 2005, this index, run by a British investment migration **consultancy**, has used data from the International Air Transport Association (IATA). Updated every month, it ranks 199 passports in total, **factoring in** visa-free access, visas on arrival and electronic travel authorisations (ETAs).

## SIMPLE TOOLS

Power rankings are revealing but they are also incomplete and can be **misleading**, as they are built on quantitative data, so small, remote territories such as Tristan da Cunha are given equal weight to big countries like France. According to Henley, their index is a **handy** reference tool as much for travellers as for government **policy-makers**. It illustrates the **widening gap** between top-ranking countries like Japan in 2nd place, and the least powerful, Afghanistan, whose citizens have access to only 27 destinations visa-free.

## BORN (UN)FREE

The broader implications of these rankings draw on colonial history, immigration law, global trade and political trends like tariffs and isolationism — a tendency of today's US. Countries with stable, developed economies have greater travel freedom because their citizens are considered low-risk. Racism plays a role in keeping countries in their place: Germans or Canadians are not seen as potential illegal immigrants, for example, but it is a different story for Somalis or Libyans. Such rules and even indexes themselves may be part of the problem with their hierarchical approach and definition of power in these terms.

## HEADING TO HELSINKI

An alternative way to rank countries is by how much citizens are happy to stay at home. Through its annual Freedom in the World report, the US-based NGO Freedom House ranks 210 countries or territories by their citizens' access to political rights and civil liberties. Each are given a status score and the higher the score, the more 'free' a country is. On this index, Henley leader Singapore has a score of 48 and is called only "partly free." Spain and Italy have scores of 90, one point below the UK. All are called "free". The US (also "free") has a score of 83. And despite its history of colonisation from Russia on one side and Sweden on the other, Finland tops the report with a score of 100!

## SINGAPORE: FREEDOM FOR SOME

Just 750 square kilometres in size, Singapore has a parliamentary political system which has been dominated by the same party and the family of its current prime minister, Lee Hsien Loong, since 1959. The electoral and legal framework allows for some political pluralism, but constrains the growth of credible opposition parties and limits freedoms of expression, assembly and association. The UK's passport has fluctuated over the years and its power has waned over the last decade from its previous long-held number one position — last held jointly with the US in 2014. It is now on a par with

Belgium, Portugal and Switzerland. The US has also dropped, and is now, tiedwith Estonia. The Israeli passport has risen from 24th place to 19th place this year, while the passport of the Palestinian territories is ranked way down at 100.

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# Glossary

- **burgundy-coloured** = di colore borgogna
- **holds** = possedere
- **policy-makers** = legislatori
- **The broader** = più ampie
- **long-held** = mantenuta a lungo
- **dropped** = scendere
- **granting** = concedere
- **draw on** = fare uso di
- **framework** = quadro
- **consultancy** = consulenza
- **handy** = utile
- **tariffs** = dazi
- **score** = punteggio
- **constrains** = restrizioni
- **on a par with** = alla pari con
- **tied** = in parità
- **factoring in** = tenere in considerazione
- **misleading** = ingannevoli
- **widening gap** = ampliare la distanza
- **despite** = nonostante
- **has waned** = diminuire
- **jointly** = congiuntamente