BEST COUNTRIES

2026



WPP | BAV

In association with The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania





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WELCOME TO BEST COUNTRIES 2026

The world's best annual guide to how countries are perceived by consumers globally, why people think what they do, and why this matters to brands.



The way a country is perceived has a direct effect on how people feel about the brands and businesses that come from there. The words "Made in ..." are incredibly powerful drivers of behaviour – both in terms of willingness to consider buying a brand, and in determining what people are prepared to pay for it.

Beliefs about a country set expectations of quality, safety and reliability. When a consumer encounters a brand they've not heard of before, these beliefs affect their expectations of the brand. Similarly, they reflect the way holidaymakers, Business Decision Makers and students think about where they want to spend their money, and where they want to be.

In turn, perceptions and the performance of brands affect how people feel about the countries those brands are from, and this feeds back into the development of the country itself.

In the best-case scenario, a positive view about a country drives willingness to buy its products and services, and a good experience with brands perpetuates a virtuous cycle. This generates economic growth and opportunity for these countries and their people by driving trade, travel and investment.

Best Countries was developed by WPP, the trusted growth partner for the world's leading brands, and its proprietary BAV brand analytics tool, and by the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania.

The ranking is based on an extensive and rigorous global survey, which asks a range of people from all over the world about the many ways in which they perceive different countries.

WHY DO WE RANK COUNTRIES?

There is a close relationship between how people feel about a country, and their attitudes towards the brands they associate with that country. Strong countries fuel strong brands, and vice versa.



Photo by Egor Komarov on Unsplash



83%

of consumers globally agree that "consumer brands play an important role in defining a country's culture".

86%

of consumers globally say they feel proud of the brands that represent their country abroad.

80%

say the country a product is "Made in" affects their likelihood of choosing it.

83%

say "I prefer brands brands 'Made in' my country".

79%

are confident in their country's ability to adapt to global changes and challenges.

76%

say their country is a good place to start a new business.

Think of Italy and Gucci; to many, both represent the latest fashion, cultural excellence, sexiness, and accessibility (depending on your location and budget). Gucci is intrinsically Italian, and Italy is synonymous with Gucci. The same could be said of Ferrari, or, in a very different price bracket but reflecting many of the other benefits associated with Brand Italy, Barilla and the brands in the Ferrero group.

In Germany, it's the automotive brands that most obviously feed into perceptions of Brand Germany, showing the world the standard of manufacturing and precision that Germany can provide. IKEA, meanwhile, is often the first experience of Sweden that international consumers have; their view of an entire nation is shaped by the pace of their progress with an Allen key, and whether or not they enjoy meatballs.

Brands can both shape and be shaped by perceptions of their country of origin. Japan and South Korea have both moved from being inexpensive manufacturing bases to centres of excellence, particularly in automotive and consumer electronics. Brands such as Sony, Toyota, Samsung and Kia have all played a role in driving international predisposition to favour Japanese and Korean brands – and to pay a premium for them. Singapore and Singapore Airlines together make an excellent example of this symbiosis in action.

When a country and its brands represent consistent qualities and values, they lend one another credibility, and there is a multiplier effect for both.



HOW TO MEASURE & COMPARE COUNTRIES

Developed by WPP BAV, the annual best countries ranking was first launched in Davos at the 2016 World Economic Forum Annual Meeting, the world's largest gathering of global political and business leaders.



The Best Countries ranking incorporates the views of around 15,000 people surveyed in 33 countries in six regions: The Americas, Oceania, Asia, the Middle East and North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Europe. Those surveyed were divided into two groups: Business Decision Makers, meaning senior leaders in an organisation, or small-business owners who employ others; and the general public, meaning adults who are nationally representative of their country in terms of age and gender. This year's survey was completed on February 24, 2026, prior to the recent period of heightened geopolitical uncertainty in the Middle East.

Collectively, the 85 countries in the 2026 ranking account for around 93 per cent of global Gross Domestic Product and represent around 78 per cent of the world's population.

Those surveyed for Best Countries were asked how closely they associated 73 attributes with a range of countries. These attributes were then grouped into 10 categories that were used to calculate the Best Countries ranking:

To be included in the ranking, countries must meet four of the following benchmark criteria, or be a top 10 country in any of those benchmarks in the last five years. They must have been, in the past five years:

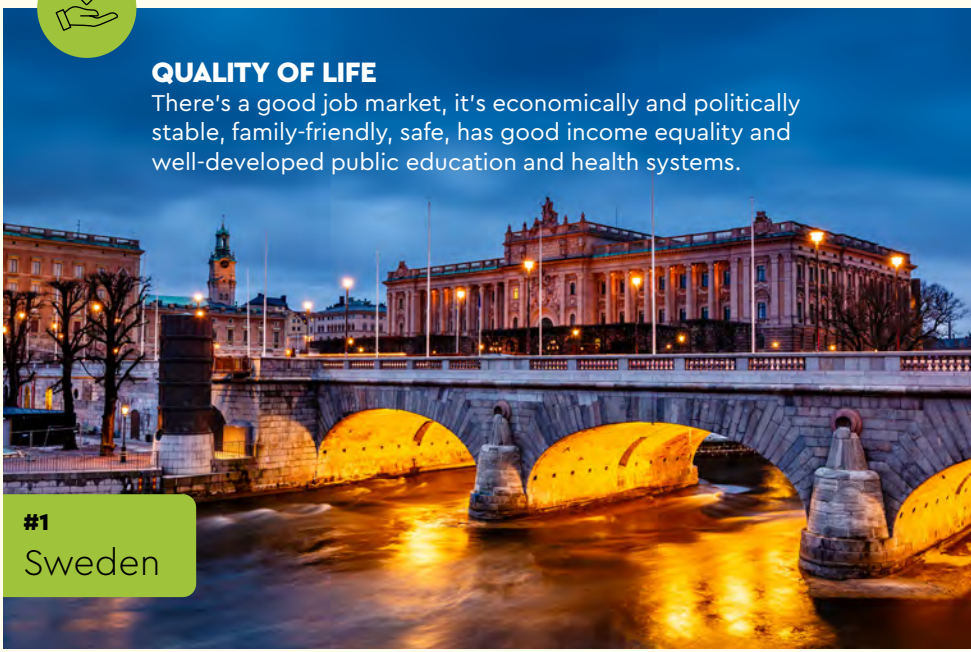
- In the Top 100 countries in terms of GDP according to World Bank data;
- A Top 100 destination for inward foreign direct investment, according to World Bank data;
- A Top 100 country for international tourism receipts or tourism arrivals, based on World Bank and UN data; and
- A Top 150 country in the UN Human Development Index.

STATE OF A NATION
THE 10 FACTORS THAT DETERMINE A COUNTRY'S BRAND



MOVERS
A country scores well on this measure when it's perceived as being up-and-coming, known for its dynamism and uniqueness.

#1
UAE



QUALITY OF LIFE

There's a good job market, it's economically and politically stable, family-friendly, safe, has good income equality and well-developed public education and health systems.

#1
Sweden



AGILITY

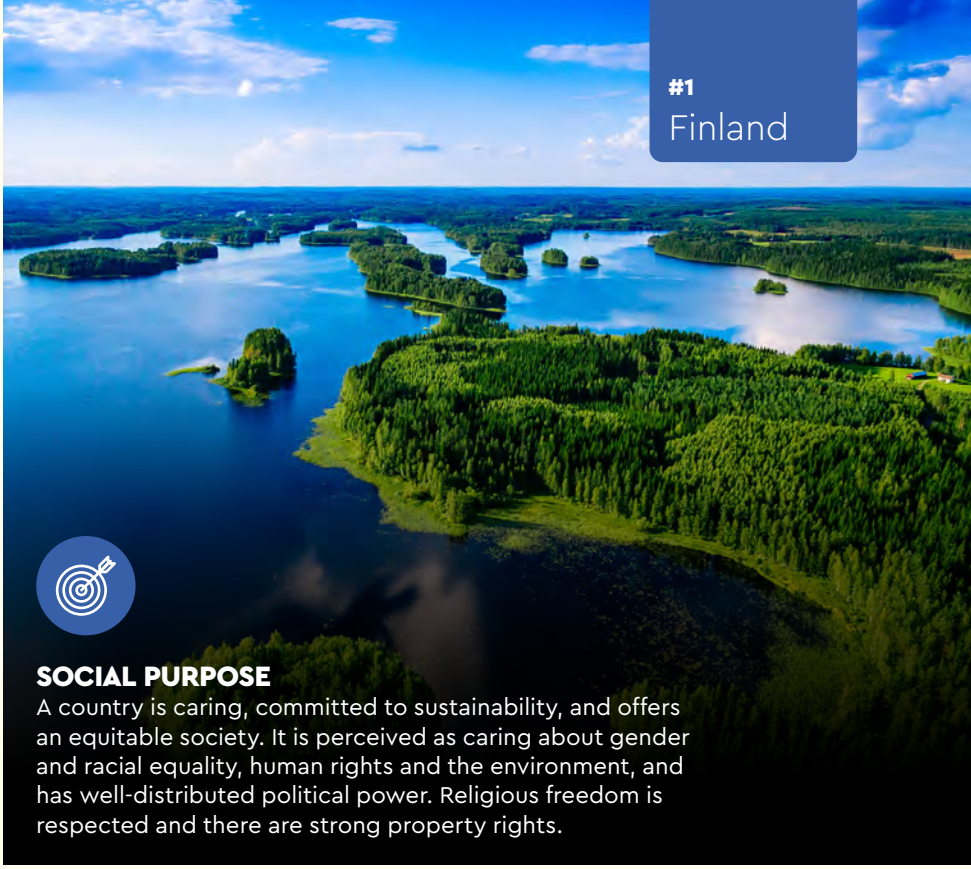
The country is adaptable, modern, forward-thinking and responsive.

#1
USA



#1
Germany

ENTREPRENEURSHIP
It is connected to the rest of the world, has an educated population, is entrepreneurial, innovative, and provides easy access to capital. There is a skilled labour force, technological expertise, transparent business practices, well-developed infrastructure, and a well-developed legal framework.



SOCIAL PURPOSE
A country is caring, committed to sustainability, and offers an equitable society. It is perceived as caring about gender and racial equality, human rights and the environment, and has well-distributed political power. Religious freedom is respected and there are strong property rights.



OPEN FOR BUSINESS
Manufacturing is inexpensive, there's a lack of corruption, the country has a favourable tax environment, and transparent government practices. Countries that perform well on being Open for Business are perceived as having minimal bureaucracy.



CULTURAL INFLUENCE
It is culturally significant in terms of entertainment, its people are fashionable and happy, it has an influential culture, is modern, prestigious and trendy. It also has strong consumer brands.

ADVENTURE
A country is seen as friendly, fun, has a pleasant climate and is scenic. Adventurous countries are often perceived as great tourism destinations.





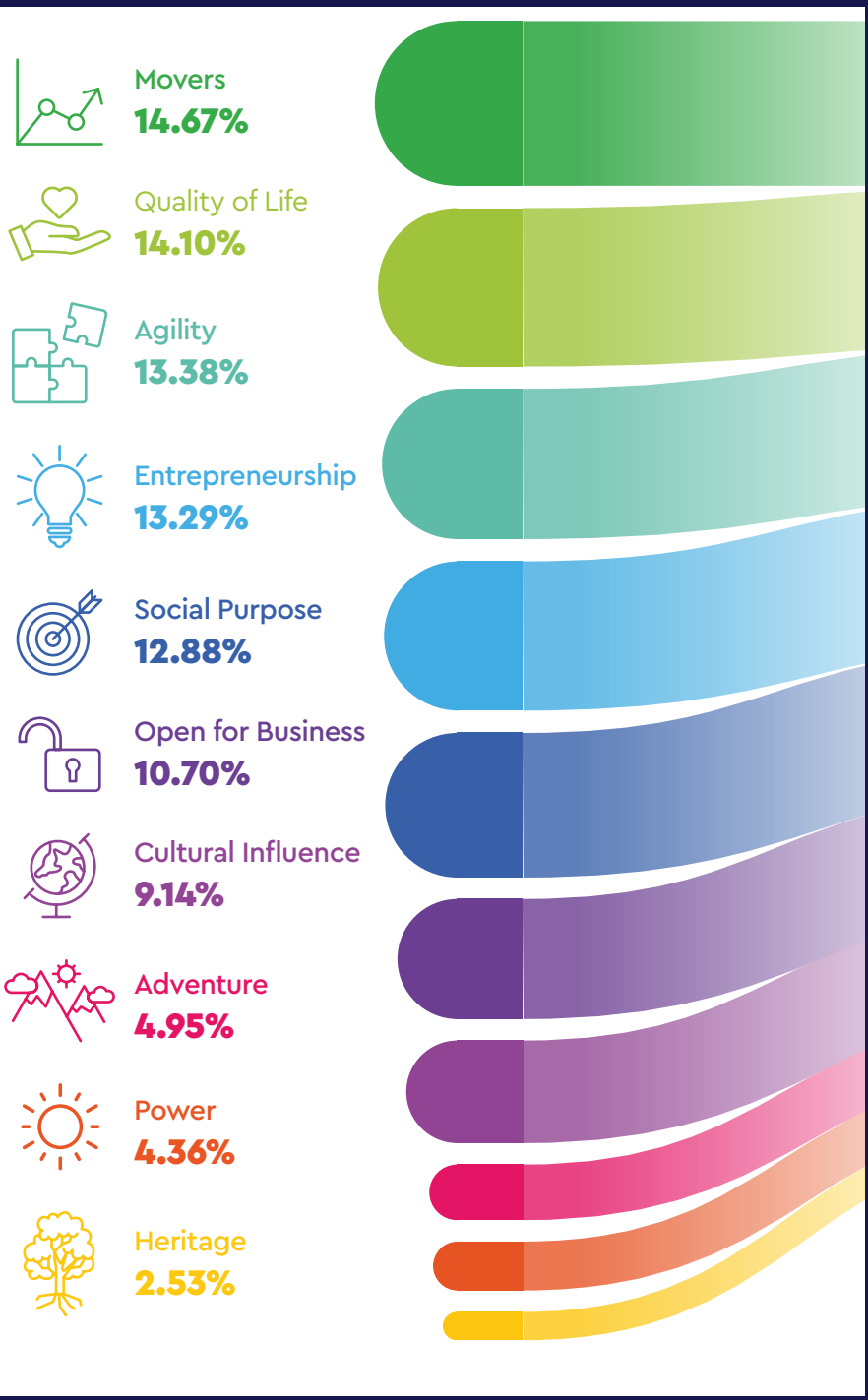
POWER
It is a leader, is economically and politically influential, has strong international alliances and a strong military. Strong exports are often part of a picture of power.

#1
USA

HERITAGE
The country is culturally accessible, has a rich history, has great food, and many cultural attractions.



#1
Italy


Movers
14.67%
Quality of Life
14.10%
Agility
13.38%
Entrepreneurship
13.29%
Social Purpose
12.88%
Open for Business
10.70%
Cultural Influence
9.14%
Adventure
4.95%
Power
4.36%
Heritage
2.53%

HOW IT ADDS UP

Each of the 10 measures is given a weighting in its contribution to the total Best Countries score for each country; countries are ranked according to their total score.

The weighting of each category in the final index is determined by the strength of its correlation to per capita GDP and total GDP. A nation performs well on Best Countries when it is perceived as providing a great Quality of Life for its people, when it demonstrates care for human rights, and when it is seen as having a focus on entrepreneurship and allowing businesses to run smoothly.

While military and financial might still play a role in determining the success of countries on the world stage, and the way people feel about them, softer power, which comes about as a result of entrepreneurship and cultural exports, plays a bigger role.

The biggest single driver of positive perceptions on Best Countries is the Movers metric, which reflects the dynamism and uniqueness of a place. In a fast-changing world, the ability to adapt with it really matters to the way people think about countries.

It's the Open for Business metric, however, that is the defining factor in the changes we see this year.

Perceptions of how countries fare on this metric explain some of the biggest rises and falls in the 2026 ranking – as well as underpinning some of the differences in the way different audiences regard countries. Details follow in the pages ahead.

Quality of Life and Agility have both gained in importance in the past year. Agile countries pivot to tackle new challenges and make the most of changing circumstances. Agile brands, meanwhile, are similarly able to adapt so they can overcome the challenges they face. Brands that are perceived as Agile are associated with dynamism, being progressive and even being visionary.

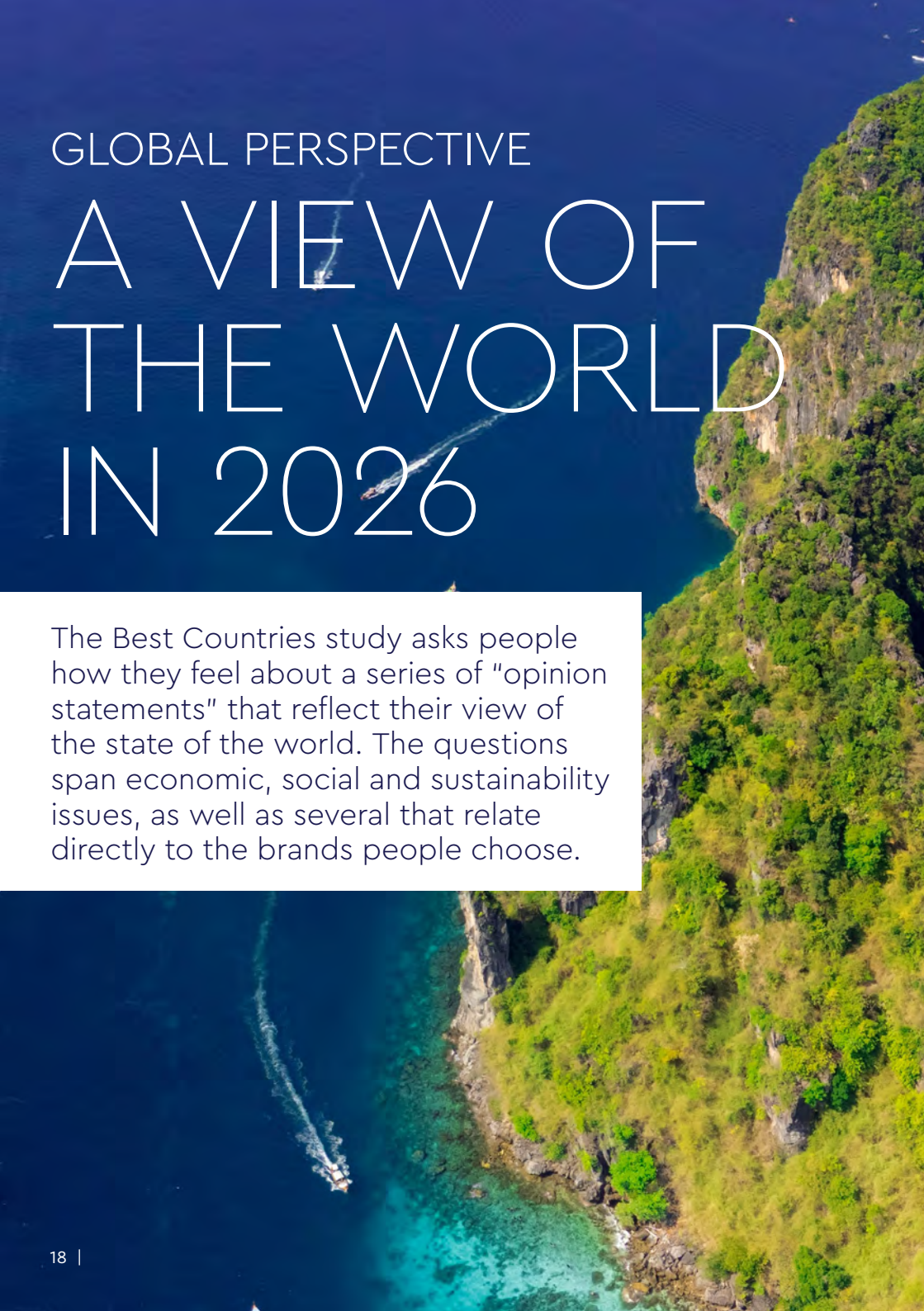
Entrepreneurship has been playing a bigger role in shaping the way people feel about a country over the past several years. People see technology making many aspects of daily life easier as each year passes; they respect the ideas and can-do spirit behind advancing technology, and have little patience with red tape.

Social Purpose is another factor that has been gaining in importance; people care about what a country stands for when it comes to fairness, sustainability and care for others, and this, in turn, shapes perceptions of the products and services it exports.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

A VIEW OF THE WORLD IN 2026

The Best Countries study asks people how they feel about a series of "opinion statements" that reflect their view of the state of the world. The questions span economic, social and sustainability issues, as well as several that relate directly to the brands people choose.





Two of the 20 questions this year focus on Artificial Intelligence, and they signal growing positivity towards what people expect the technology will mean for them.

Overall, 72 per cent of respondents now say the benefits of AI outweigh the threats, up from 66 per cent last year.

Optimism regarding AI has risen in most countries at least a little, with the surge in positive expectations around AI led by Denmark, where there's been a 20-percentage-point jump. In Denmark, 63 per cent of respondents say they now think the benefits outweigh the threats.

A similar-sized leap of faith in AI has been registered in Nigeria, where 86 per cent of respondents feel it offers more positives than negatives. Big rises were also reported in Israel and Romania, though the five most positive countries regarding the benefits of AI are now: Thailand (91 per cent think the benefits outweigh the risks), Saudi Arabia (89 per cent), India (87 per cent), Egypt (86 per cent), Vietnam (86 per cent), and Nigeria (86 per cent).

This year, fear or cynicism about AI in New Zealand has turned towards enthusiasm. Last year, 49 per cent of respondents there said there were more positives than negatives; this year, that figure is 57 per cent.

This year's survey includes a new AI question that assesses how people feel specifically about brands using AI.

Overall, 71 per cent of people surveyed for Best Countries agree with the statement 'Brands that effectively use AI create a better, more personalised experience for me'. The most positive responses came from respondents in Saudi Arabia, India, China and Egypt, and the least positive from people in France, Canada and Australia.

WHAT THE WORLD IS THINKING

Highlights from this year's opinion statements in Best Countries include:



77% *+5 percentage points from 2025*

believe that a country is stronger when it is more racially and ethnically diverse.

81% *+4 percentage points from 2025*

say they choose products from companies that have a purpose beyond making a profit.

83% *+4 percentage points from 2025*

say consumer brands play an important role in defining a country's culture.



74% *+4 percentage points from 2025*

say they're willing to make financial sacrifices to address climate change.

85%

are willing to pay extra for quality.

79%

expect the next generation to be healthier and wealthier than their own.

71%

like to be the first to try new products and services.

88%

agree that mental health is becoming a critical societal issue.

DIFFERENCE OF OPINION

Naturally, in a survey of 15,000 people across six continents, global averages are useful reflections of overall sentiment and large-scale shifts, but it's in the finer detail where the deeper insights lie.

Best Countries data can be segmented to highlight the ways in which views differ between different groups of people. A deep dive reveals that contrasting views emerge across three key audience types: between respondents in different countries, between men and women, and between generations. The generational gaps are where the biggest differences emerge.





VARIATION BY COUNTRY

Respondents in Indonesia and Kenya are among the most positive in the world on a range of issues. They have high trust in consumer brands, are among the most willing to pay for quality, and stand out for having high levels of pride in their local culture and for believing the next generation will be better off.

Best Countries respondents from Indonesia and India, meanwhile are most positive about racial and ethnic diversity, and are most likely to say they believe the next generation will be better off.

French respondents present a very different outlook, with the lowest levels of trust globally in their government's ability to positively impact society, very little trust by world standards in consumer brands, and little confidence things will improve for the next generation.

The world view among Japanese respondents diverges from the global average on a range of issues: respondents here are much less likely to be motivated by purpose-driven purchasing, to believe that diversity strengthens countries, or to be willing to make financial sacrifices to address climate change.

On the subject of AI, there's much more positivity about its impact in Southeast Asia and the Middle East than in Anglosphere countries, while scepticism is highest in Japan.



VARIATION BY GENDER

The gender divide in global opinions is generally narrow; on most issues, men and women in the same country are broadly in agreement.

The big exception to this is when people are asked about AI. Men are more likely to be positive about the impact of AI than women, and this divergence is particularly strong among respondents in Colombia, the USA, Australia, Denmark, Canada, New Zealand, Japan and Italy.

In South Korea, however, the difference in opinion on AI between men and women runs the opposite way; women are far more positive about its likely impact, as well as much more confident in their country's ability to adapt to new challenges. Globally, men are more likely to feel bullish about how adaptable their country is.

BY GENERATION

Differences in outlook between the old and the young have been observed for many generations; this year's Best Countries data shows these differences remain significant across a broad range of issues. In fact, the divergence of views between the generations is much bigger than we see between people in different countries or between the sexes.

If we look at respondents as being broadly either GenZ, Millennials, GenX, or Boomers, there are some counter-intuitive results. For this comparison, Boomers are defined as people born between 1946–1964, GenX as those born 1965–1980, Millennials born 1981–1996, and GenZ born 1997–2012.

Millennials, not GenZ, are the most positive about the effect AI is likely to have on their lives, and are also much more supportive of diversity. Millennials are more willing than their younger counterparts to be willing to make financial sacrifices to help the planet, and to select brands they believe to be driven by something other than just profit.

When we compare the oldest group with the youngest, we see Boomers are much more likely to feel pride in products from their home country (there's a 10 percentage point difference) than GenZ, while GenZ are far more likely to say they're the first to try new products.

Generational divides can be extreme; in the USA, for instance, 89 per cent of GenZ want to be the first to try new products, compared to 32 per cent of Boomers there, and there's a similar gap on the same question in Australia.

When asked whether brands using AI would provide better, more personalised experiences, there is a vast difference between the views of GenZ and Boomers. Almost 77 per cent of GenZ respondents in the USA, UK and Australia, for instance, said AI did improve their brand experiences, compared to just under 30 per cent of Boomers in the same markets.



THE 85 COUNTRIES

NORTH AMERICA

- Canada
- United States

LATIN AMERICA

- Argentina
- Brazil
- Chile
- Colombia
- Costa Rica
- Dominican Republic
- Ecuador
- Guatemala
- Mexico
- Panama
- Peru
- Uruguay

EUROPE

- Austria
- Belarus
- Belgium
- Bulgaria
- Croatia
- Cyprus
- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Greece
- Hungary
- Iceland
- Ireland
- Italy
- Latvia
- Lithuania
- Luxembourg
- Malta
- Netherlands
- Norway
- Poland
- Portugal
- Romania
- Russia
- Serbia
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- Spain
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- Ukraine
- United Kingdom

MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA

- Algeria
- Bahrain
- Egypt
- Iran
- Israel
- Jordan
- Kuwait
- Lebanon
- Morocco
- Oman
- Saudi Arabia
- Tunisia
- Türkiye
- United Arab Emirates

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

- Cameroon
- Ghana
- Kenya
- South Africa

ASIA

- Azerbaijan
- Bangladesh
- Cambodia
- China
- India
- Indonesia
- Japan
- Kazakhstan
- Malaysia
- Philippines
- Singapore
- South Korea
- Sri Lanka
- Thailand
- Uzbekistan
- Vietnam

OCEANIA

- Australia
- New Zealand

BEST COUNTRIES 2026 RANKING





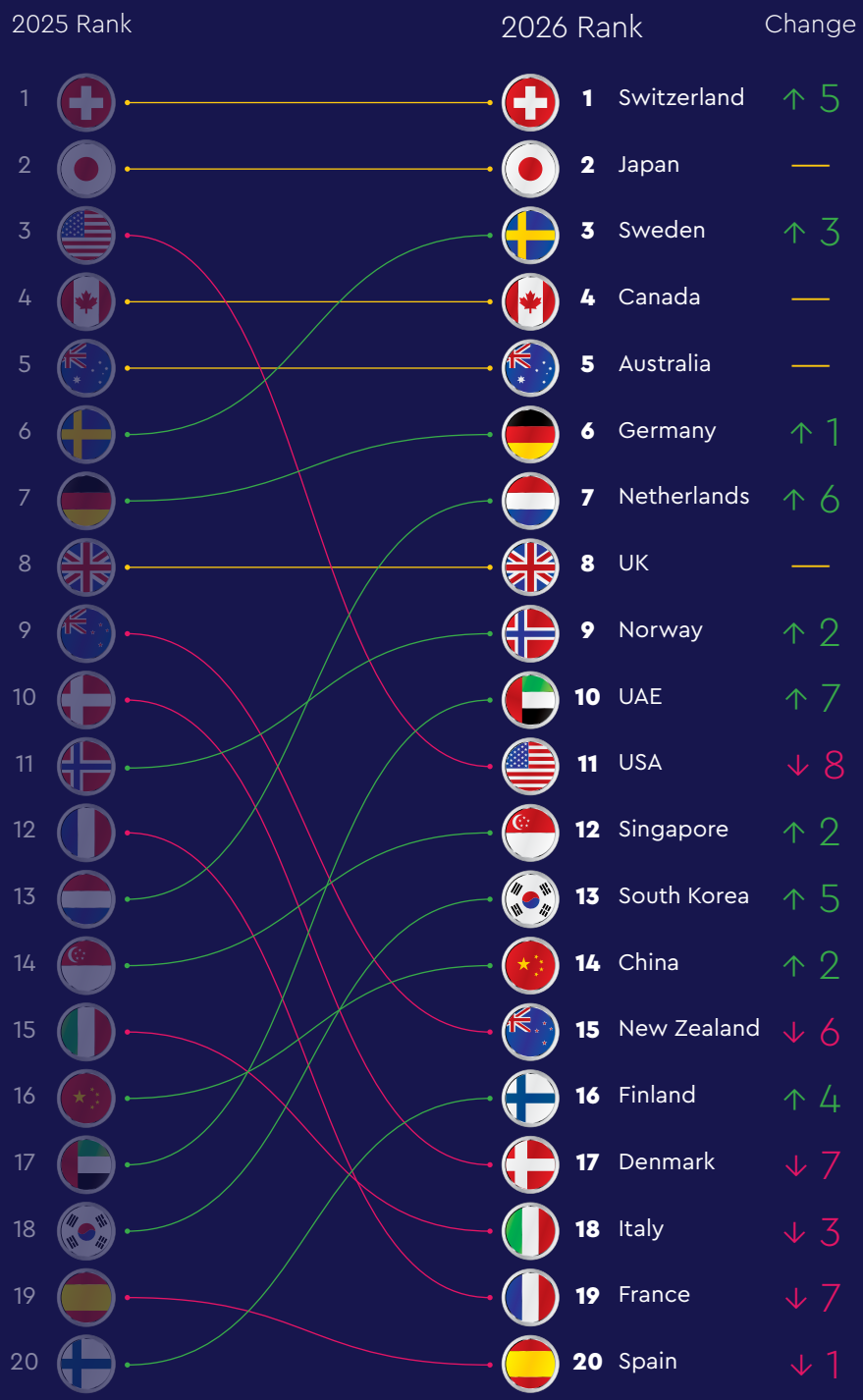
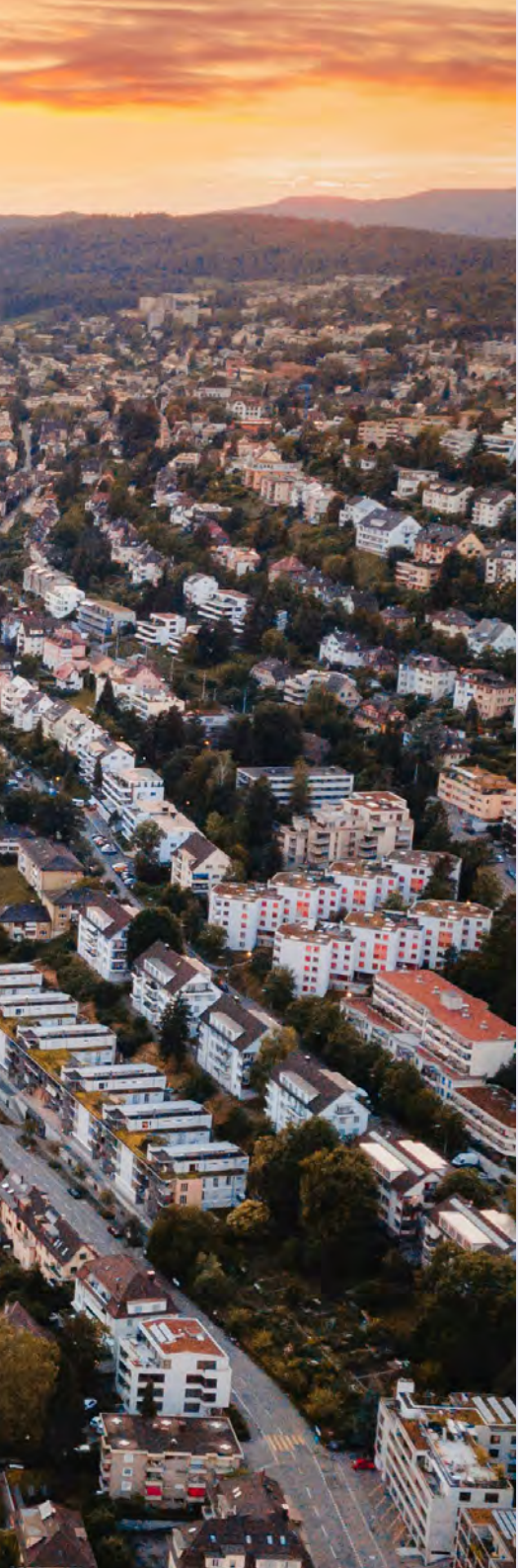

2025 Rank
2026 Rank
Change
1 1 Switzerland ↑ 5
2 2 Japan —
3 3 Sweden ↑ 3
4 4 Canada —
5 5 Australia —
6 6 Germany ↑ 1
7 7 Netherlands ↑ 6
8 8 UK —
9 9 Norway ↑ 2
10 10 UAE ↑ 7
11 11 USA ↓ 8
12 12 Singapore ↑ 2
13 13 South Korea ↑ 5
14 14 China ↑ 2
15 15 New Zealand ↓ 6
16 16 Finland ↑ 4
17 17 Denmark ↓ 7
18 18 Italy ↓ 3
19 19 France ↓ 7
20 20 Spain ↓ 1



Photo by Rico Reutimann on Unsplash



1 SWITZERLAND

Perceptions of economic and political stability, a can-do approach to business, along with safety and amazing scenery, all help power Switzerland to first place in the Best Countries ranking once again this year. The country is a world-leading performer on a huge number of metrics in our survey, combining practical plus points with softer benefits to achieve an outstanding result overall.

Precision watchmaking, high-tech manufacturing and world-renowned luxury and financial services industries help it score #1 out of 85 countries for prestige. Switzerland also leads the world on trust and business transparency, and is seen as the least corrupt country on the planet.

The factor on which it performs most strongly is Open for Business (it ranks second in the world, after Luxembourg). Best Countries respondents see Switzerland as a place with a favourable tax environment and a highly educated population, and where there's easy access to capital. It's also seen as a country where many people would like to live, with low unemployment, and a strong commitment to the environment and social justice.

THE TOP 10
UNPACKED

Japan combines an ancient culture and tradition with an ability to reinvent itself. It's synonymous with such contrasts as the ancient tea ceremony and the bullet train. Modern Japan rose from the ashes of World War Two to become, by the 1970s, an economic super-power, one of the most technically advanced countries, and is now the fourth-biggest economy in the world. It is a still a major manufacturing nation – of vehicles, electronic equipment and steel – but today, the service sector makes up the largest part of the economy.

Distinctive and dynamic, Japan is perceived as being the most innovative country in the world, and as having the most well-developed digital infrastructure. Its strong performance on the Best Countries survey results from a combination of a wide range of strengths, most of them rooted in perceptions around Entrepreneurship and Cultural Influence. It is seen as having one of the most educated and skilled workforces in the world, being dynamic, and being modern and fashionable. Men tend to see Japan as happier and more friendly than women do, while women are more likely to say Japan stands out from other countries as different.





2 JAPAN





3 SWEDEN

Sweden is a consistently high performer on Best Countries and has climbed three places this year to the bronze-medal position. Impressions of Sweden focus on its perceived high Quality of Life, a metric on which Sweden now leads the world, having overtaken neighbouring Denmark to claim top spot. Nations known for their Quality of Life are seen as stable and safe societies in which individuals can develop and prosper. There tends to be a good job market, and economic and political stability; these countries are family-friendly and have good income equality. Sweden excels in all of these areas, and is seen as having the best public health and education systems in the world.

The world views Sweden as having a very strong sense of Social Purpose (ranking second only to Finland this year). It leads the world on perceptions of commitment to social justice. It is seen as caring deeply about human rights and animal rights, and is considered a highly adaptable, happy and progressive place that offers equality. The country is widely seen as being Open for Business, with transparent business practices, a well-developed legal system, and a skilled workforce. This combination of strengths across business- and lifestyle-related metrics is what drives Sweden up the ranking this year.

THE TOP 10
UNPACKED

Canada is consistently a top five performer on Best Countries, having spent 2021 in top spot, and sitting comfortably in fourth place since last year. The country is known for its vast coastline, rugged wilderness and the medal-winning abilities of its winter sports teams. It is a country powered by a strong services sector as well as exports of energy, food, and minerals.

On Best Countries, Canada is a strong performer across three of the 10 factors that contribute to its high place in the ranking: Agility, Social Purpose, and Quality of Life. It is seen as the most progressive country in the world, and ranks #1 for religious freedom, with a reputation for being welcoming to newcomers and embracing different cultures. It is second only to Spain on Best Countries for being friendly and family-friendly, and its population is viewed as being the most educated in the world. The country ranks as one of the top three places where people would like to live; it's perceived as being safe, scenic, corruption-free, as a promoter of gender equality, and as being economically stable.





4 CANADA





5

AUSTRALIA

Australia has a broad range of strengths, which combine to ensure the country consistently achieves a top 10 place in the Best Countries ranking. A country that traditionally had strong links to the UK, Australia has been strongly influenced in recent decades, demographically and culturally, by immigration from many countries, but especially from Asia. It's seen as one of the friendliest countries in the world, and has consistently strong pulling power as a tourist destination and as a place many people say they would like to live.

On Best Countries it is a leading performer on the Adventure, Agility, Quality of Life and Social Purpose metrics. It's seen as a scenic, friendly and fun place to be, with a happy and well-educated population. Australia is viewed as being a progressive and dynamic country with a good job market, as well as being extremely family-friendly, all of which helps account for the country placing in the top 10 on the Best Countries measure of Quality of Life. Australia is perceived as being particularly concerned about environmental issues, climate goals, and animal rights, ranking among the leading countries for Social Purpose, as well as offering a sense of adventure.

THE TOP 10 UNPACKED

The largest country in the European Union and among the top five biggest economies by GDP in the world, Germany is a trading powerhouse and major exporter. While services make up the lion's share of the economy, Germany is probably best known for its exports of high-quality engineering products, especially cars. Modern Germany is seen as a highly affluent, politically stable parliamentary democracy.

Germany consistently places in the top 10 on the Best Countries ranking thanks to its unique blend of a range of strengths. It is seen as the #1 country in the world for Entrepreneurship, with the most highly skilled workforce of any country, the most well-developed infrastructure, and the best job market in the world. It's modern, prestigious, innovative, and is perceived as being both economically stable and politically well connected. Germany is also seen as a country offering a good Quality of Life.





6 GERMANY





THE NETHERLANDS 7

The Netherlands has jumped six places this year into #7 overall, marking its return to the top 10 after several years just beyond the top tier. One of the most densely populated countries in Europe, and home to around 18 million people. It's a prosperous, industrious country that has become a global logistics hub thanks to the Port of Rotterdam. It also has a strong tourism sector, and well-developed financial services, technology and creative industries.

In Best Countries, the Netherlands is seen as a modern, progressive friendly country that's free of corruption and red tape, and as providing racial equality and religious freedom. It's the second-happiest country in the world (beaten only by Norway), offering a great Quality of Life, and caring deeply about human rights and the environment. The Netherlands' greatest areas of strength are Social Purpose and Agility; it's seen as the most adaptable country in the world, the most politically stable, and as having well-developed public services.

THE TOP 10
UNPACKED

The United Kingdom's reputation results from political influence, cultural influence, and the brands that call it home. These are as varied as Charles Darwin, David Bowie, and J.K. Rowling. The UK is also known for having world-class universities and for perhaps its greatest export: the English language. It is the sixth-biggest economy in the world, and in the Best Countries ranking the UK retains eighth place this year.

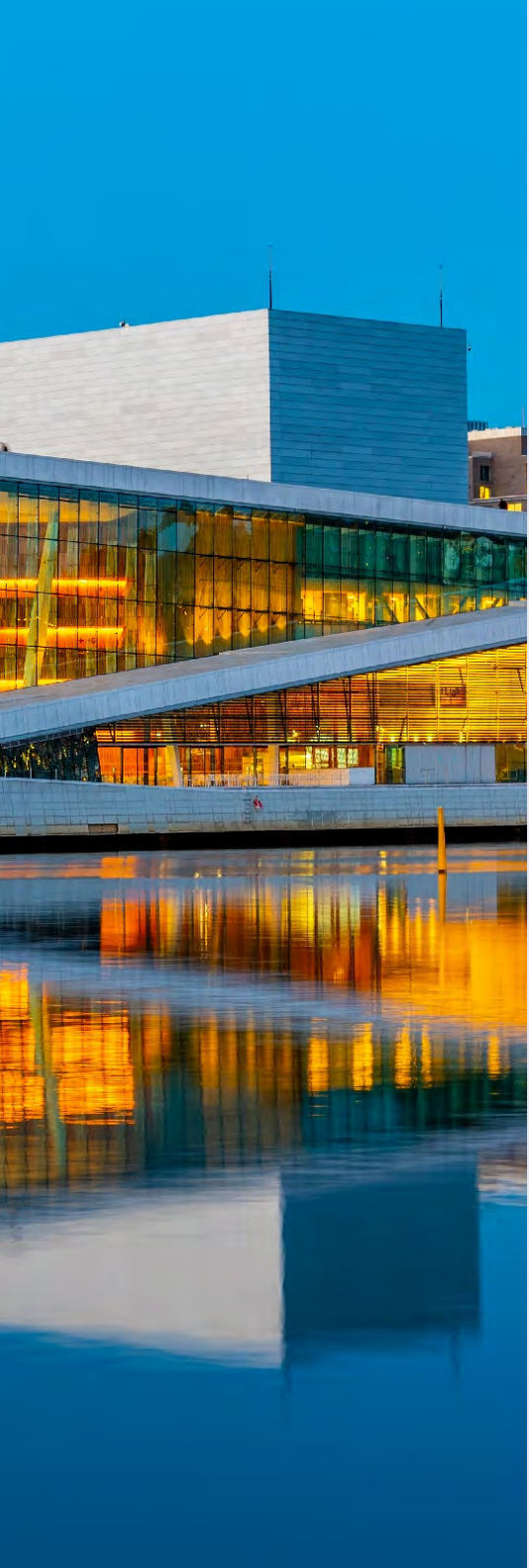
The two strongest factors in the UK's performance are Power and Entrepreneurship, followed closely by Agility and Cultural Influence. It is perceived to be the #4 most powerful country, and is #1 for having strong international alliances, #2 for being well connected, and is among the leaders for economic and political influence. While it is seen as being one of the most expensive manufacturing centres in the world, its population is thought of as highly skilled and educated, and the country is seen as modern and technologically advanced. Business Decision Makers have a slightly different view of the UK to other Best Countries respondents, and are far more positive about the UK tax environment, as well as saying it's a more fun, friendly place than other participants in the study.





8 UNITED KINGDOM





9 NORWAY

Norway is an affluent and well-developed country built on a strong oil and gas industry, fishing, and tourism thanks to its dramatic and extensive scenic coastline. It is seen as having a robust and stable economy, and a strong focus on community and sustainability.

Norway has climbed two places in the Best Countries ranking this year, and is a star performer on attributes linked to Social Purpose and being Open for Business. It leads the world on caring about the environment, being committed to climate goals, and caring about human rights, and is #1 on Best Countries for gender equality as well as fourth for social justice. It is also seen as offering a stable economic and political environment, having an educated population, and being largely free of corruption and bureaucracy. It's the happiest country in the world, according to Best Countries, is seen as friendly and safe, and is in the top 10 countries where people say they'd like to live.

THE TOP 10 UNPACKED

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has been making its way up the Best Countries ranking for several years, and this year rises seven places to make its entrance into the top 10. It became a country in 1971, when seven emirates united to form a federation, and together they kickstarted the complete transformation of the area. What was once a quiet fishing and pearling zone has, thanks to oil, finance, tourism and investment in innovation, become a major trade and transport hub.

The UAE is the highest-ranking country in the world this year on the Movers metric, which reflects perceptions of it being a dynamic, up-and-coming place that stands out as unique. The UAE ranks #1 in the world for having a favourable tax environment and is seen as a well-connected country with a good job market. It's perceived to be a powerful player in the region, and as an entrepreneurial country with well-developed infrastructure, technological expertise, and easy access to capital.





10 UAE


LIVE
WORLD IN MOTION
BREAKING NEWS
FROM BEST COUNTRIES 2026

People's perceptions of countries around the world have remained remarkably stable over the past year, with a few key exceptions.

Switzerland retains its #1 ranking and leads the world on perceptions of good governance, safety and stability, while Japan's continued high standing on Best Countries is fuelled by its expertise around digital technology and innovation.

Much of the rest of the top 10 and, indeed, the top 20, is largely unchanged this year, aside from some fairly minor shifts.

THERE IS ONE STAND-OUT EXCEPTION, HOWEVER, AND THAT IS THE UNITED STATES

The USA remains the most powerful and economically influential country in the world, according to our respondents. It ranks #1 for having strong consumer brands, and ranks #2 for leadership and political influence.





USA

#11 ↓ 8

Overall, the USA has dropped from #3 to #11 in the Best Countries ranking.

The paradox is that while the USA's hard power – its economic and military power – is unquestioned, perceptions according to several other Best Countries metrics have weakened.

Measures of stock market volatility in 2025 show there were big swings in the USA throughout the year. On the Open for Business metric, the USA has moved down.

Yet when respondents are asked which country produces the best consumer brands, the USA ranks #1 out of 85 countries. It is also seen as the most modern country in the world, ranks #2 for being entrepreneurial and having strong exports, and is seen as having vibrant cities and giving businesses easy access to capital.

Best Countries respondents rank the USA as #19 out of 85 countries when they're asked about places they would like to live.

MOVERS & SHAKERS

Overall, the top positions for Power, Entrepreneurship and Quality of Life are remarkably stable year to year. Power is dominated by the USA, China, Russia, the UK and Germany, and Entrepreneurship is consistently seen as being highest in Germany, the USA, Japan and the UK. The Nordics, Canada and Switzerland lead for Quality of Life. Beliefs about these structural strengths seem to change only slowly.

Aside from the slide of the USA, other significant shifts within the top 20 include the rise of South Korea, up five places to #13 due to a growing sense that the country is Agile and Open for Business.



South Korea

#13 ↑ 5

Open for Business ↑ 33



New Zealand has slipped out of the top 10, from #9 to #15, as a result of declining perceptions around Agility.

The question of where the world sees as being Open for Business has become something of a battleground, with significant shifts year to year not just among the top few countries, but also further down the ranking.

Asian and Gulf states have been surging into the higher positions, and the USA is this year in the bottom quarter of the league table, in 72nd place, on Open for Business, according to Best Countries respondents.

South Korea has risen 33 places on Open for Business (to #37), China is up 18 places to #35, Japan has climbed 11 places to #24, and Saudi Arabia is now in 73rd place, which is still at the tail end of the ranking on this metric, but 10 places higher than a year ago.

OPEN FOR BUSINESS TOP MOVERS 2026

South Korea	↑ 33
China	↑ 18
Japan	↑ 11
Saudi Arabia	↑ 10



GENZ ARE MORE POSITIVE ABOUT SAUDI ARABIA THAN BOOMERS
Numbers signify the gap in ranking, out of 85 countries, between GenZ and Boomer respondents

Open for Business	+75
Social Purpose	+30
Adventure	+21
Heritage	+49

When we delve into the difference of opinion between older and younger respondents, a gulf opens up.

GenZ respondents rank China 58 places higher on Open for Business than Boomer respondents do, and see the country as a more vibrant, dynamic and innovative centre of opportunity.

Similarly, the GenZ view of Saudi Arabia is unrecognisable to the Boomer audience; the country ranks 75 places higher among GenZ than Boomers on being Open for Business — the widest generational gap on any factor for any country.

GenZ also ranks Saudi Arabia 49 places higher on Heritage, 30 on Social Purpose, and 21 on Adventure than their older counterparts. For GenZ, Saudi Arabia is an exciting and dynamic economy.

Business Decision Makers also have a more positive outlook on Saudi Arabia than the general Best Countries audience, particularly regarding the country being Open for Business, but also on the Heritage metric.

Business Decision Makers who have a good understanding of Saudi Arabia's economic reforms and ambitions are also likely to have been exposed to its cultural investment and urban development programmes in a way the general public has not. Overall, Saudi Arabia ranks #29 on Best Countries in 2026, up from 32nd place a year ago.

The UAE is another country that's winning favour among younger Best Countries respondents as an excellent place to do business; something that older people generally remain uncertain about. There is a 56-place gap in how Boomers and GenZ rate the UAE as being Open for Business.

Perceptions of India skew in the opposite direction, with the broad Best Countries audience ranking the country higher on a range of measures than do Business Decision Makers. BDMs are substantially more sceptical about India's Agility and how Open for Business it is, particularly its responsiveness and dynamism.

On the key economic factors, Boomers are far more bullish on India than younger generations. Older respondents see India as far more Open for Business than GenZ (a 43-place gap in how the two audiences rank India on this metric), but GenZ is more positive about the country as a place for Adventure.

This is the opposite of the pattern for China and Saudi Arabia, and may reflect Boomers' longer awareness of India's economic trajectory, compared to the relatively recent transformation of Saudi Arabia in particular.

GENERATION GAPS – HOW AGE CHANGES PERCEPTIONS

Numbers signify the gap in ranking, out of 85 countries, between GenZ and Boomer respondents

Saudi Arabia	Open for Business	+75	GenZ higher
China	Open for Business	+58	GenZ higher
UAE	Open for Business	+56	GenZ higher
India	Open for Business	-43	Boomers higher
India	Agility	-40	Boomers higher

STARS ON THE GLOBAL STAGE

The leading countries in the world in 2026 on each of the 10 factors that make up a country brand.

Movers

UAE
China
Egypt
Saudi Arabia
Iceland

Open for Business

Luxembourg
Switzerland
Finland
Norway
Thailand

Quality of Life

Sweden
Denmark
Canada
Switzerland
Finland

Cultural Influence

Italy
France
Japan
USA
Spain

Agility

USA
Singapore
South Korea
Canada
UK

Adventure

Greece
Brazil
Italy
Thailand
Spain

Entrepreneurship

Germany
USA
Japan
UK
China

Power

USA
China
Russia
UK
Germany

Social Purpose

Finland
Sweden
Denmark
Norway
Canada

Heritage

Italy
Spain
Mexico
Greece
France

HOTSPOTS FOR INNOVATION, HAPPINESS, FAMILIES, FOOD & MORE

Our data can be analysed to create rankings based on all 73 attributes we measure on Best Countries.

Most of these attributes are grouped together to make the 10 factors contributing to a country brand's overall ranking, but taken individually, they provide some fascinating insights.

Most economically stable

Switzerland
Germany
Canada
Sweden
Australia

Most trustworthy

Switzerland
Denmark
Sweden
Norway
Finland

Most economically influential

USA
China
UAE
Germany
UK

Most innovative

Japan
China
South Korea
Singapore
Germany

Most committed to climate goals

Norway
New Zealand
Denmark
Finland
Iceland

Most committed to social justice

Sweden
Denmark
Finland
Norway
Netherlands

Most trusted media

UK
Sweden
Canada
Finland
Norway

Most athletically talented

Brazil
Russia
Argentina
USA
Kenya

Best wildlife attractions

South Africa
Kenya
Australia
Brazil
Malaysia

Most family-friendly

Spain
Canada
Italy
Australia
Sweden

Has the best food

Italy
Mexico
Spain
France
Greece

Most trendy

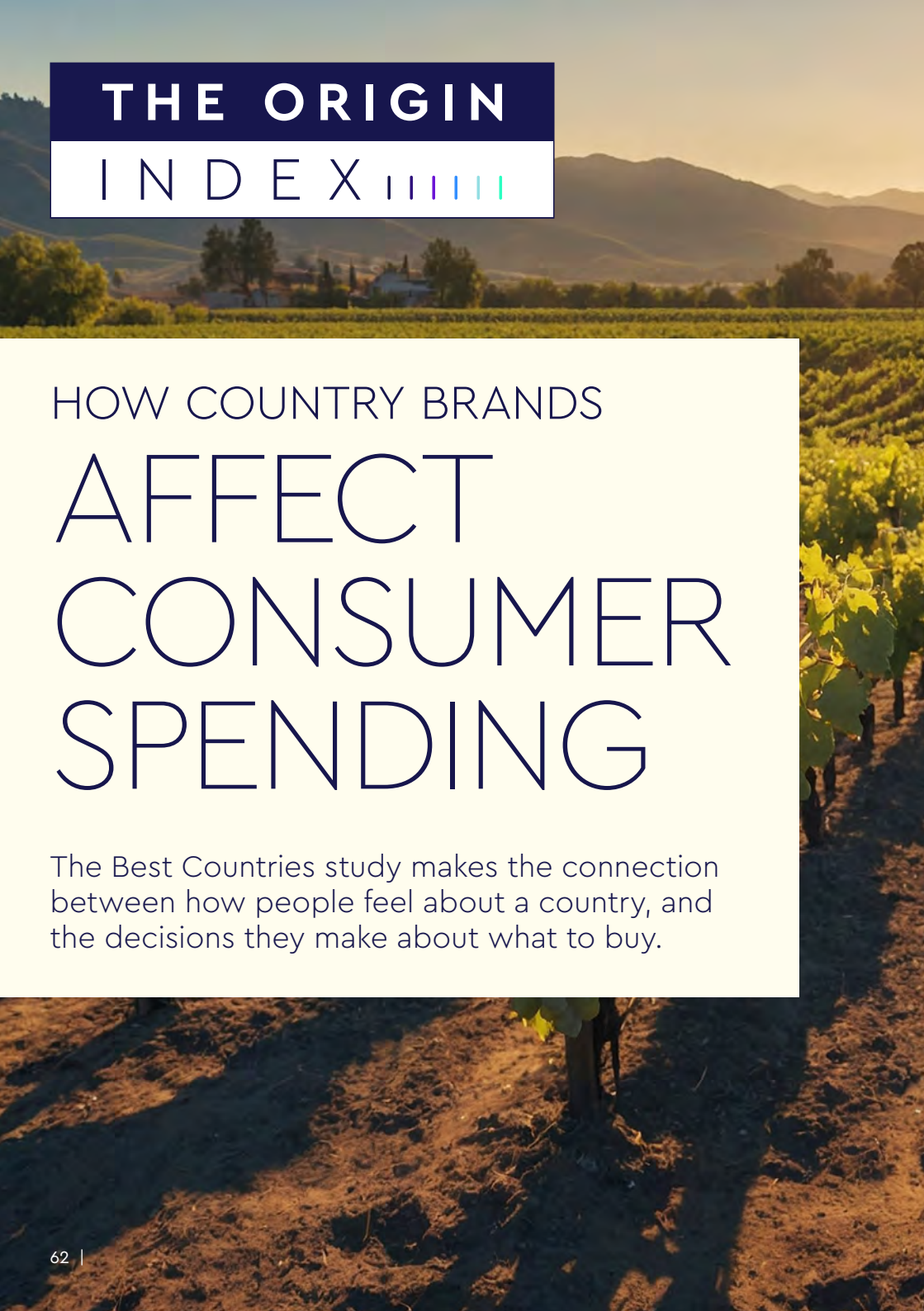
Italy
UAE
South Korea
France
USA

Happiest

Norway
Netherlands
Finland
Sweden
Switzerland

Has vibrant cities

Spain
France
Italy
USA
Japan



HOW COUNTRY BRANDS

AFFECT CONSUMER SPENDING

The Best Countries study makes the connection between how people feel about a country, and the decisions they make about what to buy.



A country's brand is linked to expectations of product and service quality, safety, reliability, and the conditions in which products are made. Are the workers treated fairly and paid a decent wage, for instance, and has a product been made with consideration for the environmental impact of the process?

These questions are all answered in a consumer's mind subconsciously, based on what they think about a brand, but also what they think about where it's from.

A country of origin also brings with it connotations of style and modernity, and these are considerations that affect not only whether someone will buy, but how much they are willing to pay.

The exact reasons for choosing products and services made in a particular country vary depending on the category and the country, though there are some commonalities among the most-preferred countries.

In general, countries that are thought to be fashionable, modern, innovative and progressive tend to appeal to consumers. Consumers are also drawn to products where they consider there's an educated population, a skilled workforce, and good infrastructure.

The Best Countries study explores the international opportunity for brands in a range of industries, based on what the world's consumers think about their country of origin. It ranks preferences in individual product and service categories, as well as overall.

THE ORIGIN INDEX

Brands can lean into the perceptions people have about their country of origin. These opinions are a powerful influence on the decisions people make as consumers. They affect what people will buy from where and – crucially for brands now seeing a squeeze on margins – whether they're prepared to pay a premium.

David Roth,
CEO, The Store WPP,
and Chairman WPP BAV

The global appeal of 'Made in the USA' has declined 5 per cent in the past year, yet the US remains one of the top three most preferred countries in the world for goods and services, with 50 per cent of respondents saying it's the country they'd choose to buy from first.

The countries seeing the biggest increase in appeal to consumers this year are Guatemala, Oman, China and Latvia, which have all seen rises of at least 3 percentage points in preference for 'Made in'.

Older consumers are more likely than younger ones to be open to buying from a broad range of countries, even though the opposite is true when it comes to visiting places. GenZ respondents named many more countries than Boomers as places they'd like to travel to, but were prepared to buy from fewer of them.

Business Decision Makers also stand out from the rest of the Best Countries audience on this question of where they prefer to buy from. They are nearly 5 percentage points less likely than the wider adult audience to say they would consider 'Made in' products from other countries.

This is not a lack of openness to buying from international markets, but rather a more discerning approach; Business Decision Makers have a strong preference for products from countries they know, but are much more selective about which countries they would consider at all.

THE LEAGUE LEADERS

MOST PREFERRED COUNTRY TO BUY FROM, OVERALL, 2026

- Japan
- USA
- Germany
- UK
- Italy
- France
- Switzerland
- China
- Canada
- Spain

Automobiles

Germany
Japan
France
Italy
UK

Clothing

France
Italy
Germany
Spain
UK

Cosmetics

France
Germany
Italy
Canada
UK

Financial services

Germany
USA
Switzerland
France
Canada

Packaged foods

Germany
France
Italy
Canada
USA

Pharmaceuticals

Germany
Switzerland
France
Canada
Japan

Technology/electronics

Germany
Japan
USA
UK
France

Spirits

Germany
Japan
USA
UK
France

ALTERNATIVE INVESTMENTS



How people perceive a country has a direct bearing on how they feel about it as a place to take a holiday, to do business or to study – all vital sources of investment for countries.



Best Countries 2026 shows there are some clear patterns among global preferences.

Destinations that appeal for doing business tend to align with the scale of their GDP; they are advanced economies with clear legal and tax frameworks, they perform well on Best Countries for business and government transparency, and they are well connected to the rest of the world.

The countries with strongest appeal as destinations for study are those that unite economic stability with Cultural Influence and Heritage. They are seen as having an educated domestic population, and are generally seen as offering a good Quality of Life.

The biggest factors behind a country being on people's travel wish lists include being well connected – travellers have to be able to reach these places fairly easily. Travellers are also looking for destinations that have cultural depth that feels accessible to them, as well as safe, vibrant cities, friendly people, and amazing scenery.

WHERE THE WORLD WANTS TO DO BUSINESS, 2026

- United States
- United Kingdom
- Italy
- Japan
- Germany
- France
- Switzerland
- Spain
- Australia
- Canada

WHERE THE WORLD IS CONSIDERING FOR UNIVERSITY, 2026

- United States
- United Kingdom
- Germany
- Canada
- France
- Japan
- Switzerland
- Australia
- Italy
- Spain

WHERE THE WORLD WANTS TO VISIT, 2026

- Italy
- Switzerland
- France
- Spain
- Canada
- United Kingdom
- Germany
- Greece
- Netherlands
- Australia



PLENTY TO CONSIDER HOW PEOPLE MAKE PLANS

The United States remains the leading country in the world for where people want to do business and go to university, followed by the United Kingdom.

European countries, led by Italy, Switzerland, France and Spain, are the countries that people say they most want to visit.

Around 48 per cent of respondents say they would consider the USA for university study, 40 per cent say they would consider Made in the USA brands, and 82 per cent

say they would consider doing business in the USA.

Germany, the UK, Canada, the US and Sweden have seen slight declines in consideration over the past year.

Across the generations, there are distinct patterns in where people are willing to consider travelling or doing business.

Older respondents – the Boomers – are much less open to considering a range of countries than their younger counterparts. At the global average level, Gen Z is 18 percentage pointsmore willing, on average, than Boomers to consider doing business with a given country, and 16 percentage points more willing to consider visiting.

Conversely, Boomers are 17.7 percentage points more willing to say they would never consider doing business in a given country, and 16 percentage points more likely to say they would never consider visiting a country.

The differences are particularly stark for certain destination countries: GenZ are much more likely to say they'd consider visiting Russia and Colombia than Boomers, although it's older consumers who are more likely to think of the USA and Japan as places they'd consider doing business.

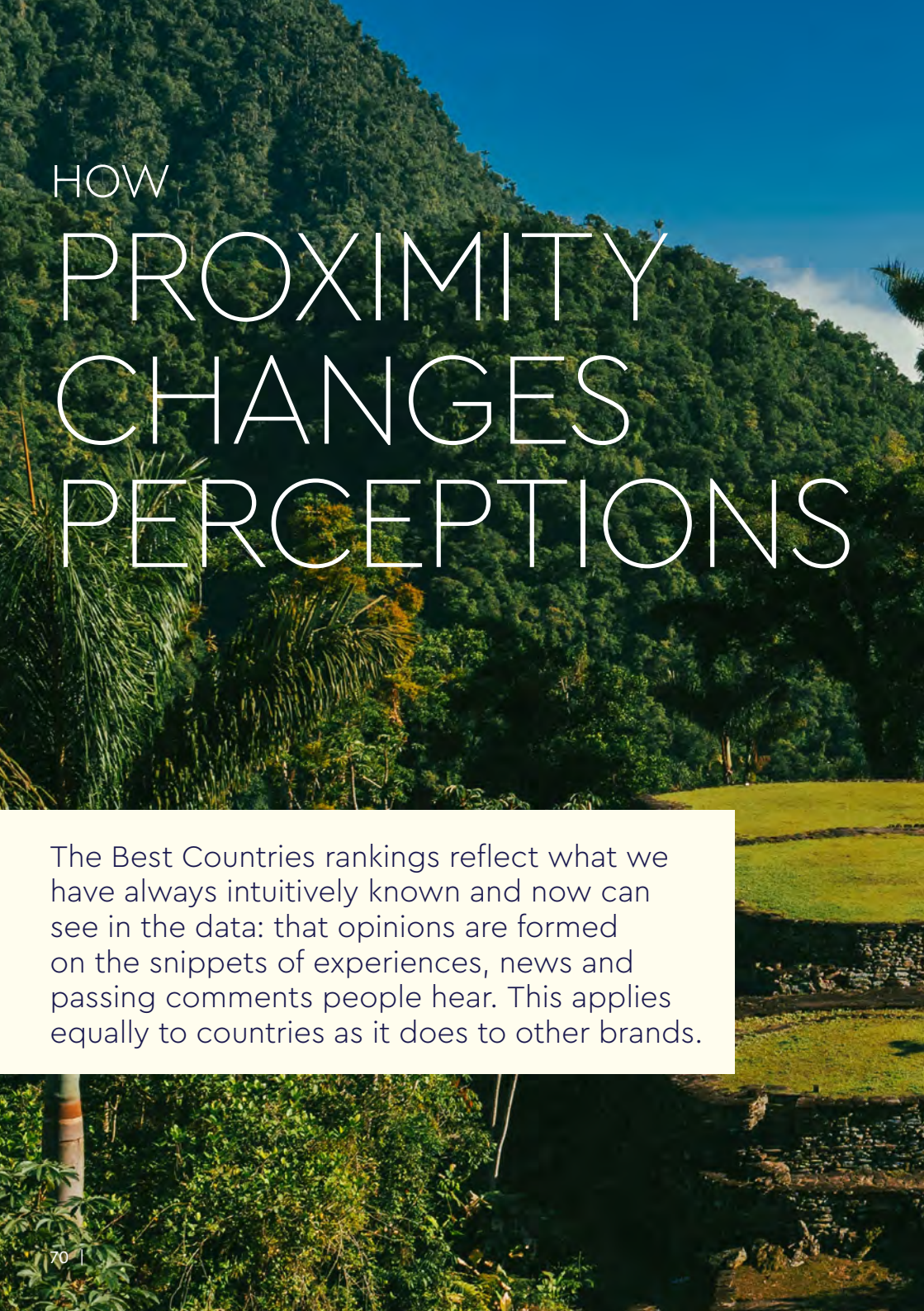
It's the generation between these two extremes, the Millennials, who are most likely to have visited or done business with a wide range of countries.



DECISIONS, DECISIONS

Business Decision Makers (BDMs) responding to Best Countries are far more likely than others to have visited a range of countries and to be open to visiting those they've not been to before. This is consistent across multiple age groups and to both men and women.

The difference in a willingness to consider certain countries applies particularly to the United Arab Emirates, which BDMs are much more willing to visit or consider for university than other respondents.



HOW PROXIMITY CHANGES PERCEPTIONS

The Best Countries rankings reflect what we have always intuitively known and now can see in the data: that opinions are formed on the snippets of experiences, news and passing comments people hear. This applies equally to countries as it does to other brands.



Most people have a view of brand Ferrari, for instance, whether or not they've ever driven one, had a ride in one, or ever expect to be in a position to buy one. Similarly, most people in the world have a view on, for example, Kenya, China, Colombia and Australia, and what they imagine these countries' strengths and weaknesses are.

Those views might well be informed as much by popular culture and assumptions as they are by first-hand experience, but these all affect perceptions, and perceptions are what affect consumers' buying decisions.

In this region-by-region breakdown of the Best Countries data, we look at how people's views on what a country represents differs depending on how close they are to it and, by implication, how likely they are to know a little more about it.

It's clear that proximity really does affect perceptions. Views that people have on a country that's in their own part of the world aren't necessarily more 'correct' than those from farther away. Even people in countries that share borders may well have biases and make assumptions about their neighbours.

But what our data shows is that when a country makes changes – through the brands it develops, the news it generates and the experiences it gives people – that change is likely to be reflected in perceptions of people in the region before it reaches the wider world.

→



LATIN AMERICA



Mexico and Brazil stand out to a global Best Countries audience as being well known for a handful of different attributes, while the other countries in the region are perceived globally as having fairly similar strengths and weaknesses.

Brazil is the highest-ranked country by the global audience and respondents from the LatAm region this year; last year, Mexico topped the local league table, but has slipped down the ranking in 2026 to fall behind its larger neighbour.

Globally, Brazil is perceived as being a country offering adventure, culture and a rich heritage. Its greatest strength in the eyes of the world, however, is its sporting prowess (it ranks #1 in the world out of 85 countries), thanks to generations of brilliant footballers, excellence in jiu jitsu and surfing, and a long line of world-beating Formula 1 drivers. It's seen as the most powerful country in the region, but is only mid-table on measures relating to business and investment, such as economic stability, innovation, a lack of corruption, and ease of access to capital.

Mexico is viewed as a fun, adventurous destination with an influential culture and great food (#2 in the world, after Italy), but is let down by poor opinions of business and government transparency, the state of its infrastructure, and safety. Safety and governance are a recurring theme for this region; the global view is that these are lacking across the region (Uruguay ranks highest for safety, at #45, and Costa Rica for government transparency, at

→



#37). The view from within the region on these measures is similarly poor, although Costa Rica, Chile, Ecuador and Uruguay are seen as safer by observers within the region than those outside.

Many of the other LatAm countries score fairly consistently when ranked by a global audience. They all are seen as having significant opportunity to improve on measures related to the environment and providing a good Quality of Life, as well as entrepreneurship and the kind of conditions needed to support businesses.

Within the region, more distinctions are drawn between the strengths and weaknesses of each country, and overall the view across the board is more positive (LatAm countries are an average of 17 places higher when ranked by respondents in the region than they are on the global study).

Uruguay, for instance, is widely seen within the region as being the most Open for Business and adaptable, with a strong commitment to social purpose and a well-educated, entrepreneurial population. Colombia is perceived to be a fun, happy and sexy place with dynamic cities and an appealing climate, though it's one of the bottom performers for safety.

Chile shines for adaptability and affordability, Panama for having a favourable tax environment, and Ecuador for its wildlife, though it ranks bottom out of 85 countries for having well-developed infrastructure, when ranked by respondents in the region.



THE GLOBAL VIEW ON THE BEST COUNTRIES IN LATIN AMERICA

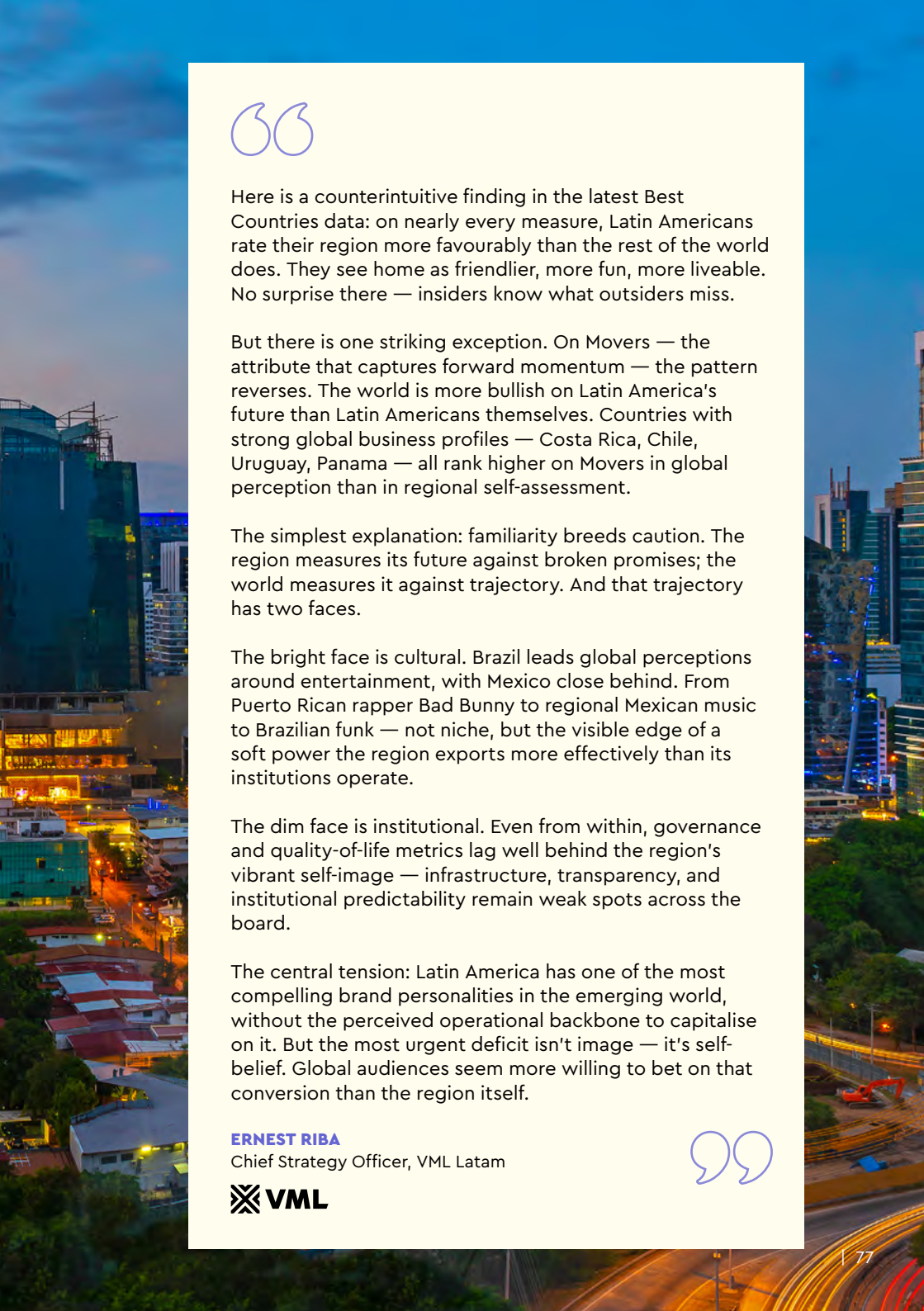
Relative Position	Country Ranking (Ranking out of 85 countries)	
1	Brazil	28
2	Mexico	35
3	Argentina	38
4	Costa Rica	43
5	Panama	54
6	Chile	55
7	Uruguay	57
8	Peru	59
9	Dominican Republic	62
10	Colombia	63

THE LOCAL VIEW ON THE BEST COUNTRIES IN LATIN AMERICA

Relative Position	Country Ranking (Ranking out of 85 countries)	
1	Brazil	19
2	Mexico	21
3	Argentina	25
4	Uruguay	27
5	Colombia	31
6	Chile	33
7	Costa Rica	34
8	Peru	39
9	Dominican Republic	43
10	Panama	46



LATIN AMERICA'S CONFIDENCE GAP



Here is a counterintuitive finding in the latest Best Countries data: on nearly every measure, Latin Americans rate their region more favourably than the rest of the world does. They see home as friendlier, more fun, more liveable. No surprise there — insiders know what outsiders miss.

But there is one striking exception. On Movers — the attribute that captures forward momentum — the pattern reverses. The world is more bullish on Latin America's future than Latin Americans themselves. Countries with strong global business profiles — Costa Rica, Chile, Uruguay, Panama — all rank higher on Movers in global perception than in regional self-assessment.

The simplest explanation: familiarity breeds caution. The region measures its future against broken promises; the world measures it against trajectory. And that trajectory has two faces.

The bright face is cultural. Brazil leads global perceptions around entertainment, with Mexico close behind. From Puerto Rican rapper Bad Bunny to regional Mexican music to Brazilian funk — not niche, but the visible edge of a soft power the region exports more effectively than its institutions operate.

The dim face is institutional. Even from within, governance and quality-of-life metrics lag well behind the region's vibrant self-image — infrastructure, transparency, and institutional predictability remain weak spots across the board.

The central tension: Latin America has one of the most compelling brand personalities in the emerging world, without the perceived operational backbone to capitalise on it. But the most urgent deficit isn't image — it's self-belief. Global audiences seem more willing to bet on that conversion than the region itself.

ERNEST RIBA
Chief Strategy Officer, VML Latam

VML



OCEANIA



Australia and New Zealand are by far the most populous and economically powerful of the 14 countries in the Oceania region, so while all of these places have unique strengths and positive attributes, only the Big Two make it into Best Countries 2026.

This double act is quite the pairing, consistently putting in a stellar performance on the world stage, with reputations that make a much bigger impact on global consumer sentiment than the scale of their populations would suggest.

Both Australia and New Zealand have consistently placed in the Best Countries top 10 overall for many years, but this year sees New Zealand slip from 9th to 15th, 10 places behind its larger neighbour. Australia is in 5th position once again.

Closer to home, the view is somewhat different. New Zealand ranks higher overall than Australia when assessed by respondents who actually live in these countries. This was also the case last year. This results from higher local rankings for New Zealand for Agility, for Cultural Influence, and on the Movers metric, which reflects dynamism. The two countries rank #4 and #8 out of 85 countries worldwide, according to respondents in Oceania, with New Zealand coming out on top.

OCEANIA



The two countries are perceived by the global audience as having much in common. Both are seen as offering a good Quality of Life (with Australia having the edge), and a strong sense of Social Purpose (New Zealand has the upper hand here). They're both perceived as being adaptable, caring, friendly and fun places, and both rank in the top 10 globally as places our respondents would like to live (NZ in 4th and Australia in 6th place).

What sets them apart in global perceptions is that Australia is seen as being a much more powerful and economically influential nation. People see also see it as having a stronger job market, more dynamic cities, and more wildlife, although New Zealand leads on being more scenic, more committed to climate goals, and being happier.

But ask people within the region about the places they call home, and there's a clear sense of pride and satisfaction with what these countries both offer and represent. Both countries rate themselves and their next-door neighbour as being even more friendly and fun than the global audience perceives them to be; they see themselves as much more entrepreneurial and innovative, and the two countries rank #1 and #2 as the places respondents here would most like to live.

International consumers associate these markets with a prestige that few of the respondents who live here acknowledge. Yet locally, there's a deeper appreciation of the quality of food available, and a much greater sense that they have strong exports than is recognised outside the region.

The opportunity for both Australia and New Zealand is to develop perceptions that contribute to their Movers scores, which reflect dynamism and uniqueness. Both countries perform much more strongly on this regionally than they do globally.

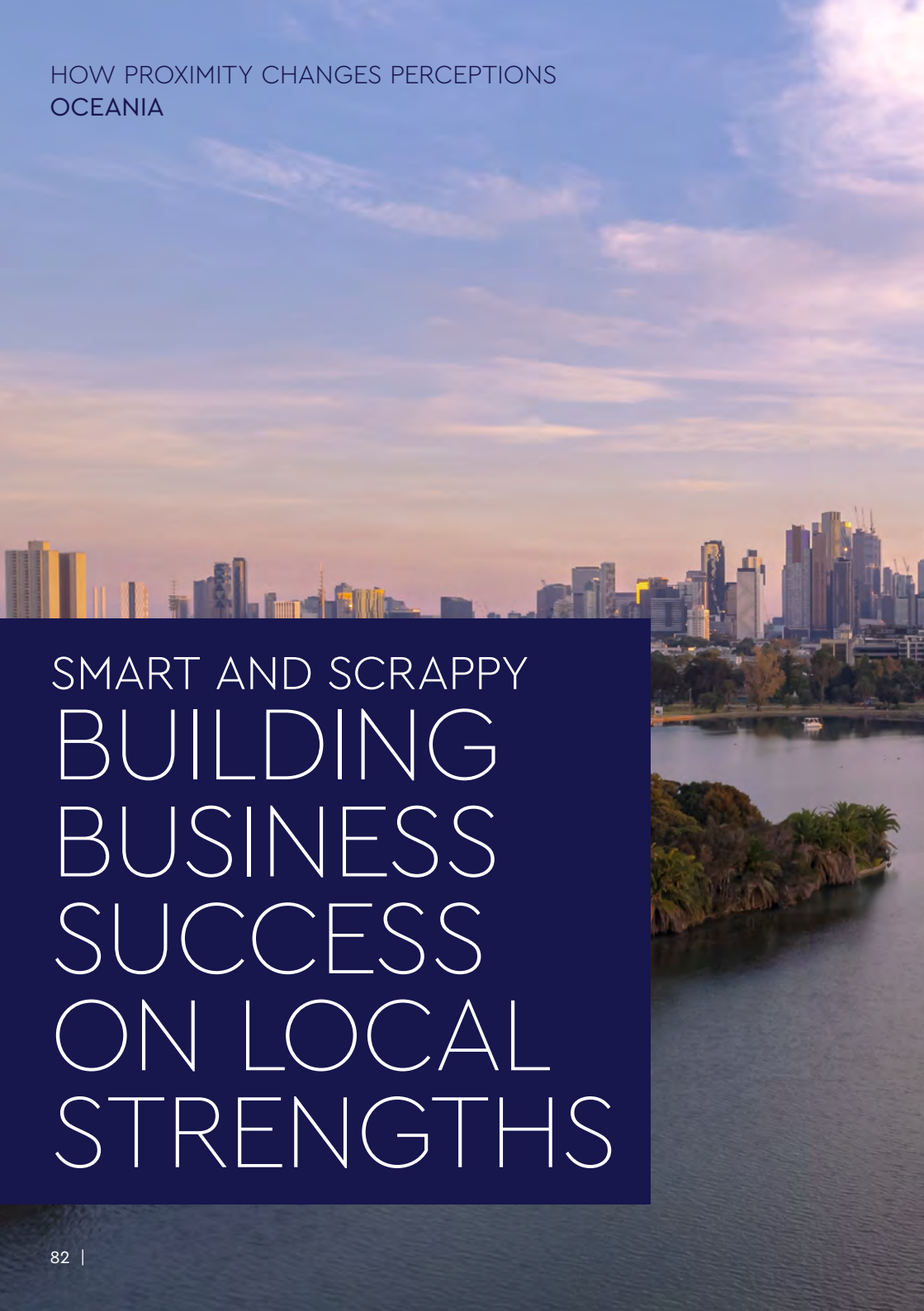


THE GLOBAL VIEW ON THE BEST COUNTRIES IN OCEANIA

Relative Position	Country Ranking Ranking out of 85 countries	
1	Australia	**5**
2	New Zealand	**15**

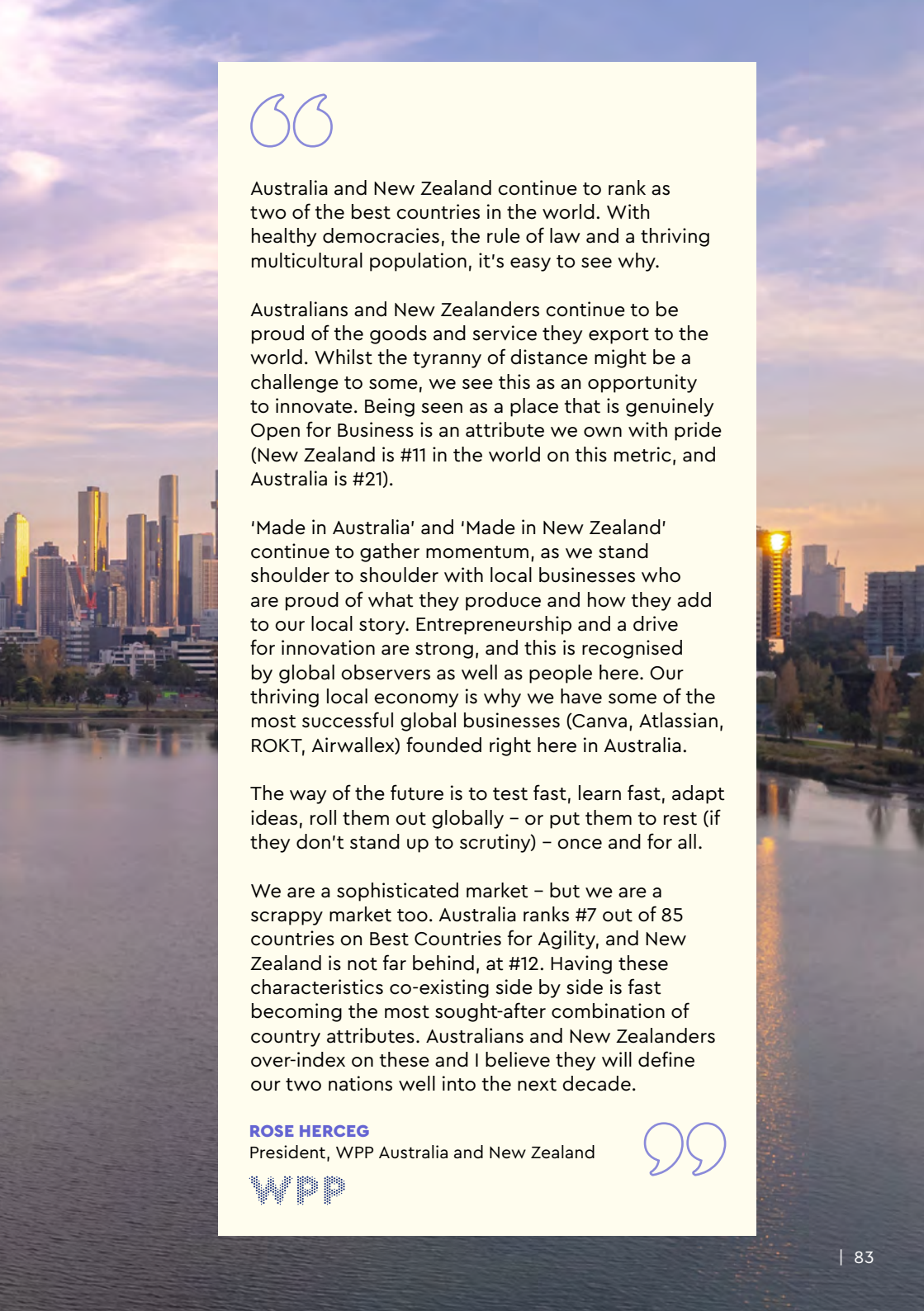
THE LOCAL VIEW ON THE BEST COUNTRIES IN OCEANIA

Relative Position	Country Ranking Ranking out of 85 countries	
1	New Zealand	**4**
2	Australia	**8**



SMART AND SCRAPPY

BUILDING BUSINESS SUCCESS ON LOCAL STRENGTHS



Australia and New Zealand continue to rank as two of the best countries in the world. With healthy democracies, the rule of law and a thriving multicultural population, it's easy to see why.

Australians and New Zealanders continue to be proud of the goods and service they export to the world. Whilst the tyranny of distance might be a challenge to some, we see this as an opportunity to innovate. Being seen as a place that is genuinely Open for Business is an attribute we own with pride (New Zealand is #11 in the world on this metric, and Australia is #21).

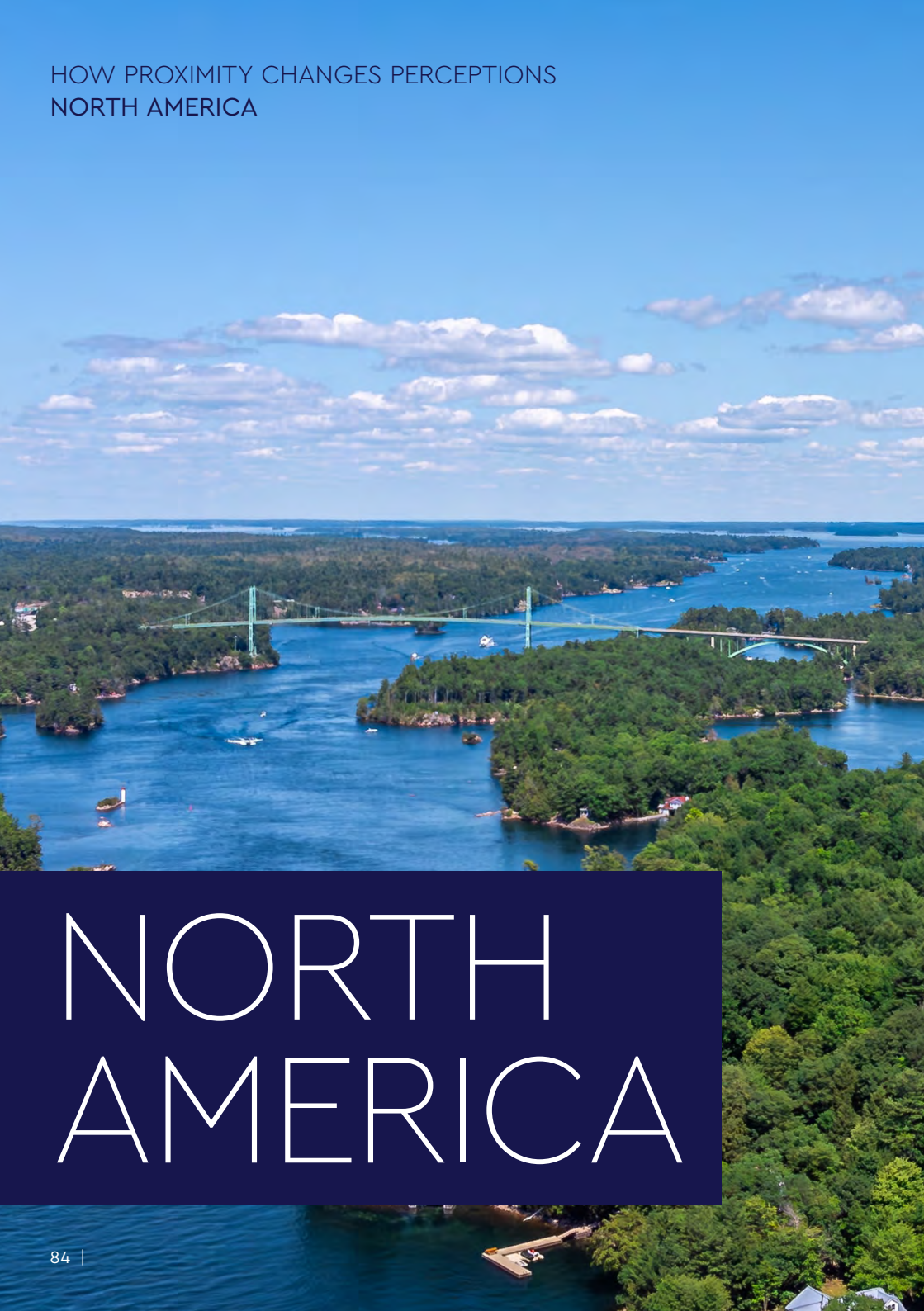
'Made in Australia' and 'Made in New Zealand' continue to gather momentum, as we stand shoulder to shoulder with local businesses who are proud of what they produce and how they add to our local story. Entrepreneurship and a drive for innovation are strong, and this is recognised by global observers as well as people here. Our thriving local economy is why we have some of the most successful global businesses (Canva, Atlassian, ROKT, Airwallex) founded right here in Australia.

The way of the future is to test fast, learn fast, adapt ideas, roll them out globally – or put them to rest (if they don't stand up to scrutiny) – once and for all.

We are a sophisticated market – but we are a scrappy market too. Australia ranks #7 out of 85 countries on Best Countries for Agility, and New Zealand is not far behind, at #12. Having these characteristics co-existing side by side is fast becoming the most sought-after combination of country attributes. Australians and New Zealanders over-index on these and I believe they will define our two nations well into the next decade.

ROSE HERCEG
President, WPP Australia and New Zealand

WPP



NORTH AMERICA



The Best Countries study categorises only the USA and Canada as being in North America (Mexico is taken with Latin America). The winner of this two horse-race is Canada overall, as assessed by a global audience as well as those who live in these countries, though they each excel in different areas.

In essence, the USA leads its northern neighbour on metrics linked to hard power: it's seen as being more powerful generally, being more of a leader, having a stronger military, and being more economically and politically influential than Canada, though less economically stable. This view is consistent among Best Countries respondents who live in the region and those who are based beyond it.

On most measures of soft power, however, Canada is the clear leader. It is seen as being much more progressive, safer, more scenic and more trustworthy. The country is widely viewed as a more friendly destination than the USA, and as a better place for families.

It's often the case that when we compare the global view of countries with the regional view, respondents tend to be more positive about the countries they live close to and know well. This is not necessarily the case in North America.

HOW PROXIMITY CHANGES PERCEPTIONS
NORTH AMERICA

Overall, the world ranks Canada as #4 out of 85 countries on Best Countries, and the USA is #11. Within the region, they are #7 and #11, respectively, so fairly closely aligned.

The USA is seen as much more politically stable by respondents who live outside the region, and both countries rank higher on the Movers ranking – linked to uniqueness and dynamism – globally than they do locally. Both countries are considered more trendy and more prestigious by respondents from outside the region rather than within it.

Yet there's more positivity at home, particularly regarding the USA, on other issues. Safety, care for the environment and racial equality are all attributes that respondents in the region see the USA doing better at than opinion elsewhere suggests.

When it comes to the quality of the local food, and the two countries' cultural attractions, respondents within the region are far more positive than observers from the rest of the world. They have a greater appreciation of local heritage, and rate friendliness in the USA more highly than people outside North America.





THE GLOBAL VIEW ON THE BEST COUNTRIES IN NORTH AMERICA

Relative Position	Country Ranking Ranking out of 85 countries	
1	Canada	**4**
2	United States	**11**

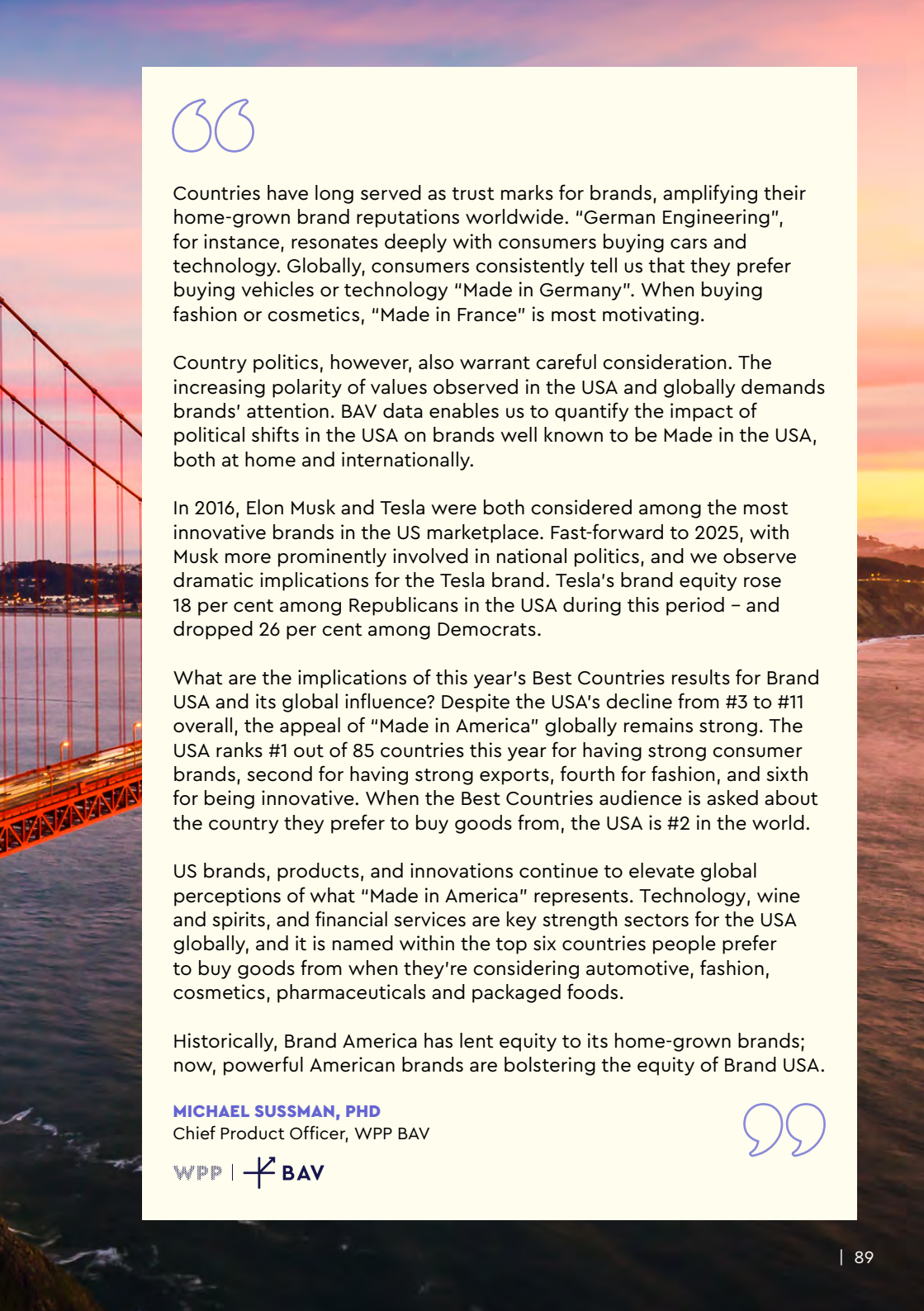
THE LOCAL VIEW ON THE BEST COUNTRIES IN NORTH AMERICA

Relative Position	Country Ranking Ranking out of 85 countries	
1	Canada	**7**
2	United States	**11**



ROLE REVERSAL

HOW BRANDS NOW SUPPORT BRAND USA



Countries have long served as trust marks for brands, amplifying their home-grown brand reputations worldwide. "German Engineering", for instance, resonates deeply with consumers buying cars and technology. Globally, consumers consistently tell us that they prefer buying vehicles or technology "Made in Germany". When buying fashion or cosmetics, "Made in France" is most motivating.

Country politics, however, also warrant careful consideration. The increasing polarity of values observed in the USA and globally demands brands' attention. BAV data enables us to quantify the impact of political shifts in the USA on brands well known to be Made in the USA, both at home and internationally.

In 2016, Elon Musk and Tesla were both considered among the most innovative brands in the US marketplace. Fast-forward to 2025, with Musk more prominently involved in national politics, and we observe dramatic implications for the Tesla brand. Tesla's brand equity rose 18 per cent among Republicans in the USA during this period – and dropped 26 per cent among Democrats.

What are the implications of this year's Best Countries results for Brand USA and its global influence? Despite the USA's decline from #3 to #11 overall, the appeal of "Made in America" globally remains strong. The USA ranks #1 out of 85 countries this year for having strong consumer brands, second for having strong exports, fourth for fashion, and sixth for being innovative. When the Best Countries audience is asked about the country they prefer to buy goods from, the USA is #2 in the world.

US brands, products, and innovations continue to elevate global perceptions of what "Made in America" represents. Technology, wine and spirits, and financial services are key strength sectors for the USA globally, and it is named within the top six countries people prefer to buy goods from when they're considering automotive, fashion, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals and packaged foods.

Historically, Brand America has lent equity to its home-grown brands; now, powerful American brands are bolstering the equity of Brand USA.

MICHAEL SUSSMAN, PHD
Chief Product Officer, WPP BAV

WPP | BAV



ASIA



Asia is home to several stars on the global stage across a range of measures. Japan, Singapore, China and South Korea are all well-defined in the minds of consumers not just for one particular strength but for a unique blend of qualities.

The Asian countries perceived to be best in the world both by people in this region and the rest of the world are Japan, China and Singapore. Japan is seen as the leader by global respondents, and among a regional audience it's Singapore that's considered the best, with South Korea taking second place, China third, and Japan in fourth position.

There's broad agreement globally and within the region on what makes the best of the best stand out: Singapore is widely seen as being an agile country that's Open for Business, and is modern, technologically advanced, and has good infrastructure and a world-class education system. Locally, it's also seen as having a great job market and offering the best Quality of Life anywhere in the world.

China is best known for power, leadership, economically influential, being entrepreneurial, and as a site for cheap manufacturing. The global audience ranks China much higher for being Open for Business (a 41-place gap on the ranking of 85 countries) than local observers do; within the region, China is the lowest-ranked country out of the 16 we measure in Asia.

HOW PROXIMITY CHANGES PERCEPTIONS
ASIA

South Korea shines for cultural influence and being fashionable, as well as having a range of attributes linked to high-tech business and development. It's seen around the world as a dynamic and entrepreneurial country with vibrant cities and strong consumer brands.

Japan is a slight anomaly in that the global view of it, particularly on the Movers metric, is much stronger than it is when assessed by people who live in Asia. Within Asia, consumers see almost every other country in the region as stronger on Movers (uniqueness and dynamism) than Japan. India, China, Sri Lanka and Vietnam are seen as particularly good Movers.

Within the region, Sri Lanka and Azerbaijan are perceived to be the most different, and Malaysia and Indonesia are thought to be the most adaptable. Respondents in Asia view the countries around them as much happier and more family-friendly than the rest of the world considers them to be. India, in particular, is seen as much more family friendly by observers within Asia, and this partly explains the 40-place difference in ranking (local vs global) when people are asked whether India is somewhere they'd like to live.





THE GLOBAL VIEW ON THE BEST COUNTRIES IN ASIA

Relative Position	Country Ranking (Ranking out of 85 countries)	
1	Japan	2
2	Singapore	12
3	South Korea	13
4	China	14
5	Thailand	30
6	India	31
7	Malaysia	36
8	Indonesia	40
9	Vietnam	41
10	Philippines	45

THE LOCAL VIEW ON THE BEST COUNTRIES IN ASIA

Relative Position	Country Ranking (Ranking out of 85 countries)	
1	Singapore	1
2	South Korea	8
3	China	10
4	Japan	11
5	India	26
6	Thailand	27
7	Malaysia	29
8	Vietnam	31
9	Indonesia	32
10	Sri Lanka	47



BEYOND THE TOPLINE

THE INSIGHTS LIE IN THE DETAIL

Today, Asia serves as a critical engine of global growth, driven by vast consumer markets, leading manufacturing capabilities, and rapidly evolving innovation ecosystems. Yet perceptions of the region vary significantly depending on where those views are formed.

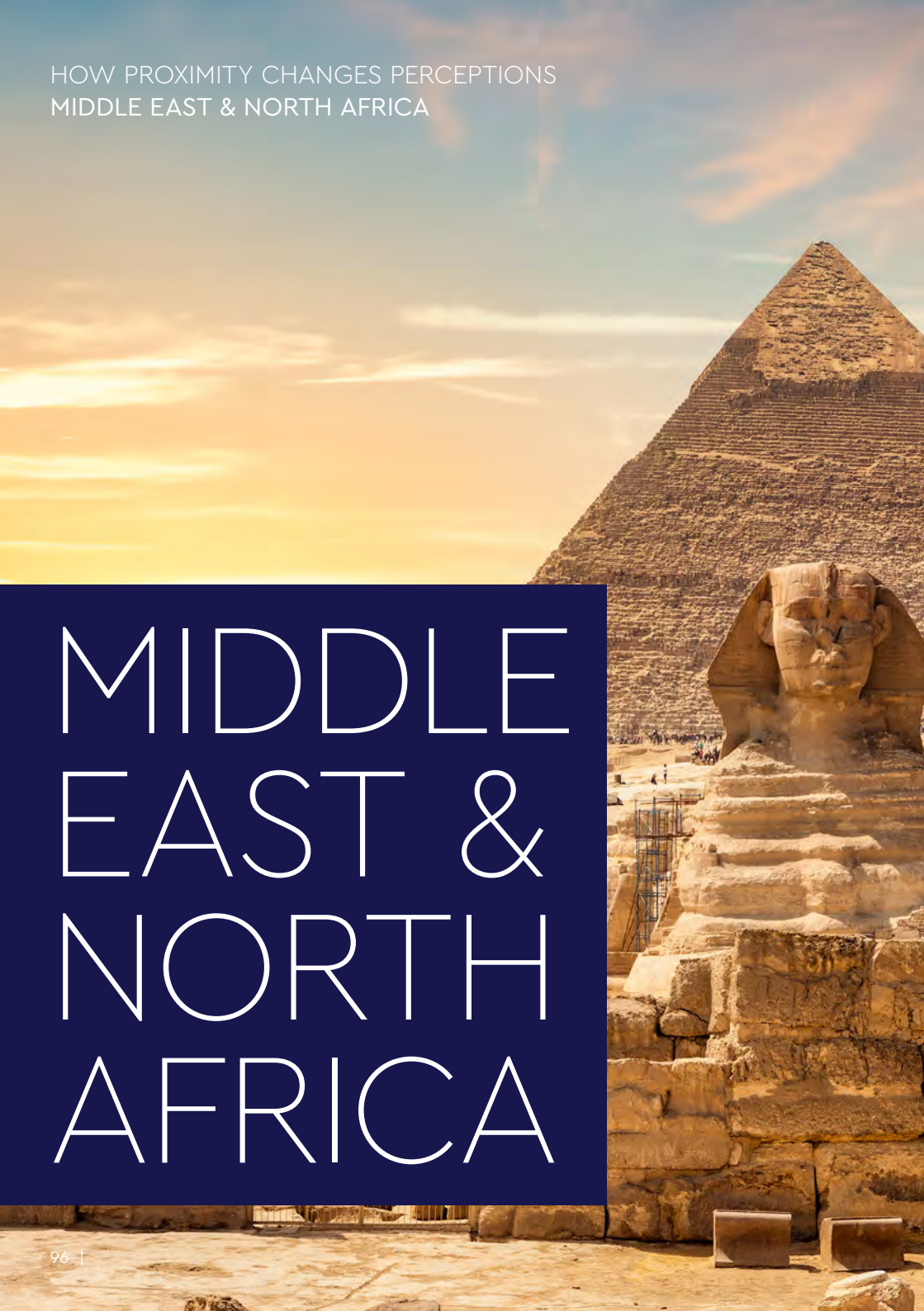
In the eyes of global consumers, Japan stands out, ranking #2 in the world, trailing only Switzerland. However, regional perceptions tell a different story. Asian respondents place Singapore at the top, while Japan falls to #11. Japanese consumers rank the US first, placing their own nation eighth – immediately following Singapore.

When it comes to product preference, Japan remains the top choice for both regional and global consumers, outperforming all other countries. Japanese goods continue to be strongly associated with quality, reliability, and innovation across industries, from electronics and automobiles to fashion and food. That reputation has proved resilient, even as competitors across Asia rise. China and South Korea, in particular, are gaining recognition, supported by globally known brands and companies expanding across sectors and markets. China now ranks 6th globally (up from 12th in 2022) and South Korea 10th globally (up from 13th in 2022). Regionally, preference for Chinese goods has surged even more dramatically: China now places 4th among Asian consumers, a significant rise from 16th in 2022.

These shifts highlight an important reality: in a region as dynamic and diverse as Asia, global reputation does not always translate locally. Markets across the region evaluate countries through their own lenses, shaped by economic ties, cultural familiarity, and strategic partnerships. Understanding local and regional perceptions, consumer preferences, and brand influence is essential. By aligning strategic insights with deep cultural understanding and targeted market approaches, companies can position themselves to fully capitalise on the region's next phase of growth.

JANE RAYNANDI
Director of Consumer Psychology & Strategy
Head of BAV – Asia

WPP | BAV



MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA



The diversity of this region is something that's deeply appreciated by the people who live here. Best Countries respondents who live in the MENA region clearly have a more detailed view of each of their neighbouring countries, what they offer in terms of lifestyle and economic opportunities, and where their weaknesses lie. The local responses show an understanding of the differences between countries in the region, based on people's experiences and knowledge of them.

The outside view is somewhat less nuanced. The countries of the MENA region all present as having broadly similar profiles to each other, according to global Best Countries respondents. The MENA countries are seen as having comparable strengths and weaknesses, and the differences between most of them are not well understood by people from outside the region.

All but one of the 14 MENA countries ranked in Best Countries perform better overall when rated by people who live in the region rather than those living beyond.

MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA

Only Morocco performs better on the global ranking; it ranks four places higher than the local audience places it overall, in 37th position out of 85 countries. The international audience ranks Morocco more positively on a range of attributes, from being more powerful, a stronger leader and more Open for Business, to being happier place with more trustworthy media. There is a 41-place gap between how regional and global audiences perceive the Moroccan scenery (the global view is more positive), and a 28-place gap in views of uniqueness.

Egypt stands out in the eyes of respondents both in this region and elsewhere. It ranks #1 out of 85 countries for having a rich history, geographical attractions and for an influential culture, #2 for cultural attractions, and #3 for uniqueness, likely to be as a result of its well-known ancient historical sites. Egypt is also seen as a country on the move; it ranks #3 in the world on the Best Countries Movers metric, which links uniqueness and dynamism, when assessed by a global audience, and just two places lower by respondents from within the region.

Most of the other countries in the region follow a similar profile pattern on Best Countries, in that they are seen more positively and for a range of different strengths by consumers who live in the region. Those who live outside MENA simply don't see much difference between them. These countries almost all occupy mid-table rankings on most of the Best Countries metrics, according to respondents from around the world.

The United Arab Emirates is seen both at home and from outside the region as a more powerful, dynamic country than many of its neighbours, and Saudi Arabia stands out for leadership and power, but the rest are considered to be very similar in identity.

A local audience sees these countries very differently, though, and much more positively. There are many metrics on which MENA countries rank 20–30 places higher locally than they do when assessed by a global audience. The local view also unlocks what makes each one special to observers.

According to the view within the region, the UAE offers the best Quality of Life and has the strongest job market, Türkiye is most adaptable and entrepreneurial, Saudi Arabia cares most about the environment and is most economically stable, Kuwait is the most trustworthy and most fun, Bahrain is least bureaucratic, and the best food is to be had in Türkiye, Morocco and Lebanon.





THE GLOBAL VIEW ON THE BEST COUNTRIES IN MENA

Relative Position	Country Ranking (Ranking out of 85 countries)	
1	UAE	10
2	Saudi Arabia	29
3	Egypt	32
4	Türkiye	33
5	Morocco	37
6	Kuwait	47
7	Israel	50
8	Bahrain	56
9	Oman	65
10	Jordan	66

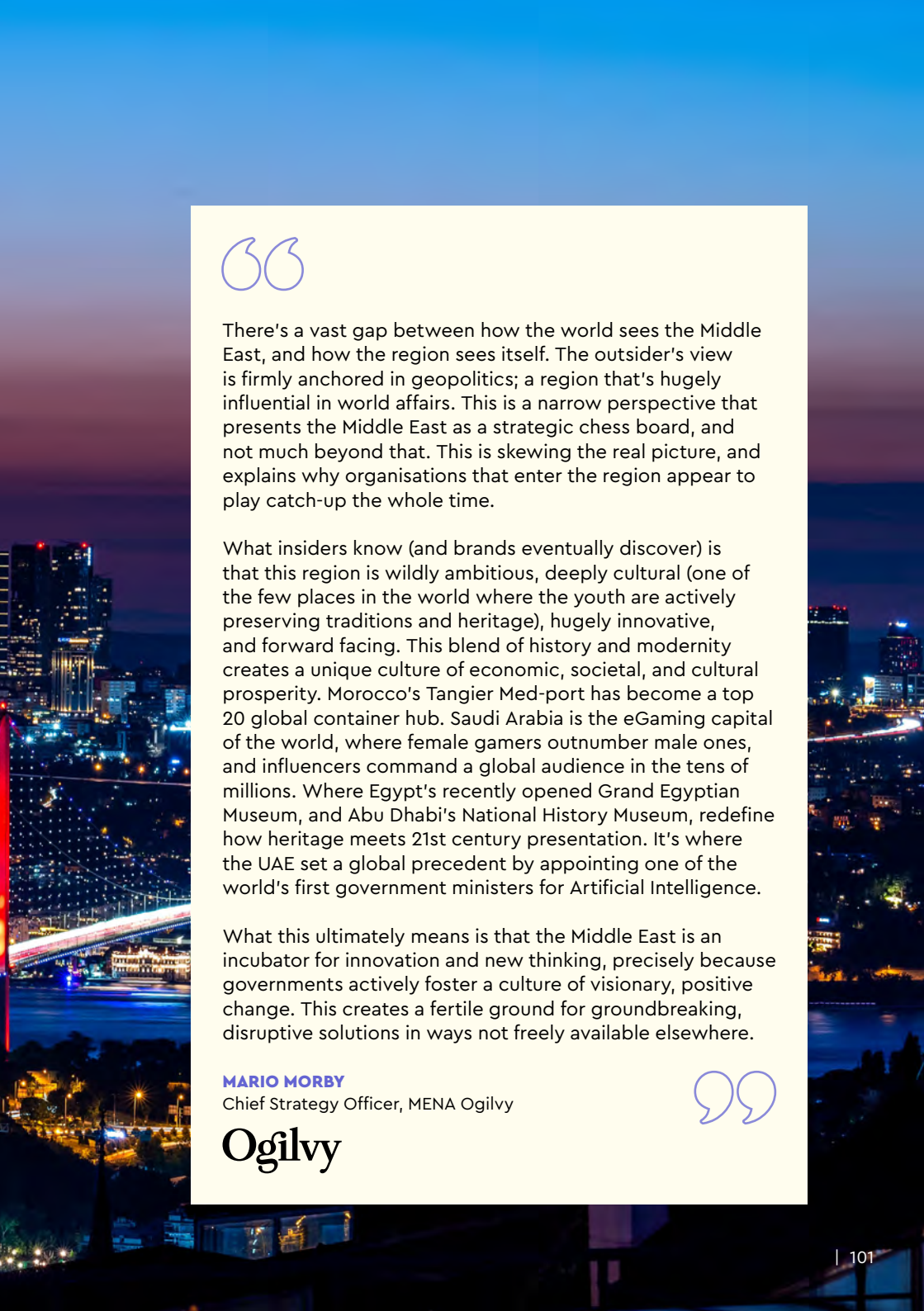
THE LOCAL VIEW ON THE BEST COUNTRIES IN MENA

Relative Position	Country Ranking (Ranking out of 85 countries)	
1	UAE	6
2	Türkiye	12
3	Saudi Arabia	18
4	Egypt	27
5	Kuwait	35
6	Bahrain	40
7	Morocco	41
8	Oman	44
9	Jordan	58
10	Israel	65



CHECK!

SEEING THE REGION AS MORE THAN A CHESS BOARD



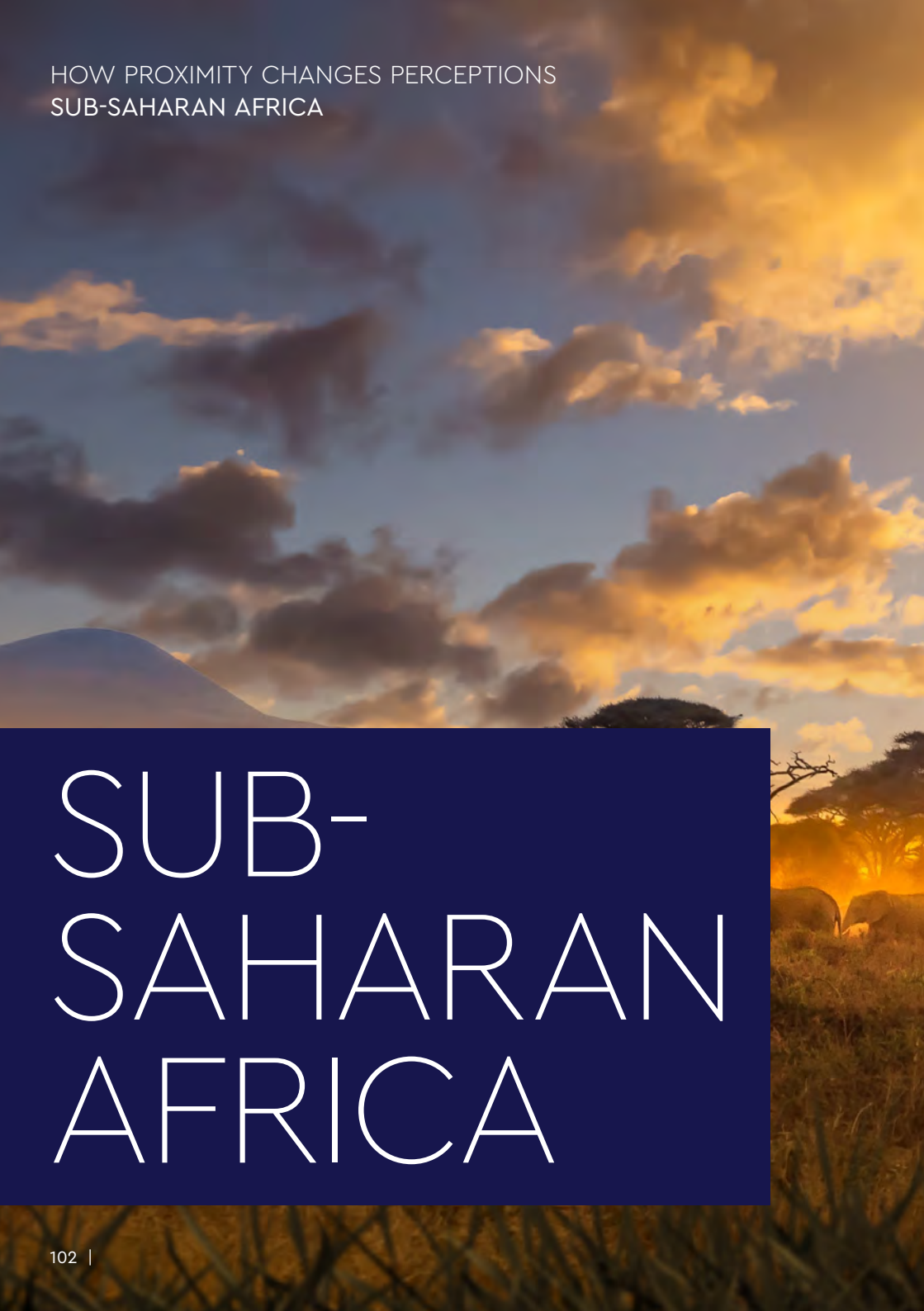
There's a vast gap between how the world sees the Middle East, and how the region sees itself. The outsider's view is firmly anchored in geopolitics; a region that's hugely influential in world affairs. This is a narrow perspective that presents the Middle East as a strategic chess board, and not much beyond that. This is skewing the real picture, and explains why organisations that enter the region appear to play catch-up the whole time.

What insiders know (and brands eventually discover) is that this region is wildly ambitious, deeply cultural (one of the few places in the world where the youth are actively preserving traditions and heritage), hugely innovative, and forward facing. This blend of history and modernity creates a unique culture of economic, societal, and cultural prosperity. Morocco's Tangier Med-port has become a top 20 global container hub. Saudi Arabia is the eGaming capital of the world, where female gamers outnumber male ones, and influencers command a global audience in the tens of millions. Where Egypt's recently opened Grand Egyptian Museum, and Abu Dhabi's National History Museum, redefine how heritage meets 21st century presentation. It's where the UAE set a global precedent by appointing one of the world's first government ministers for Artificial Intelligence.

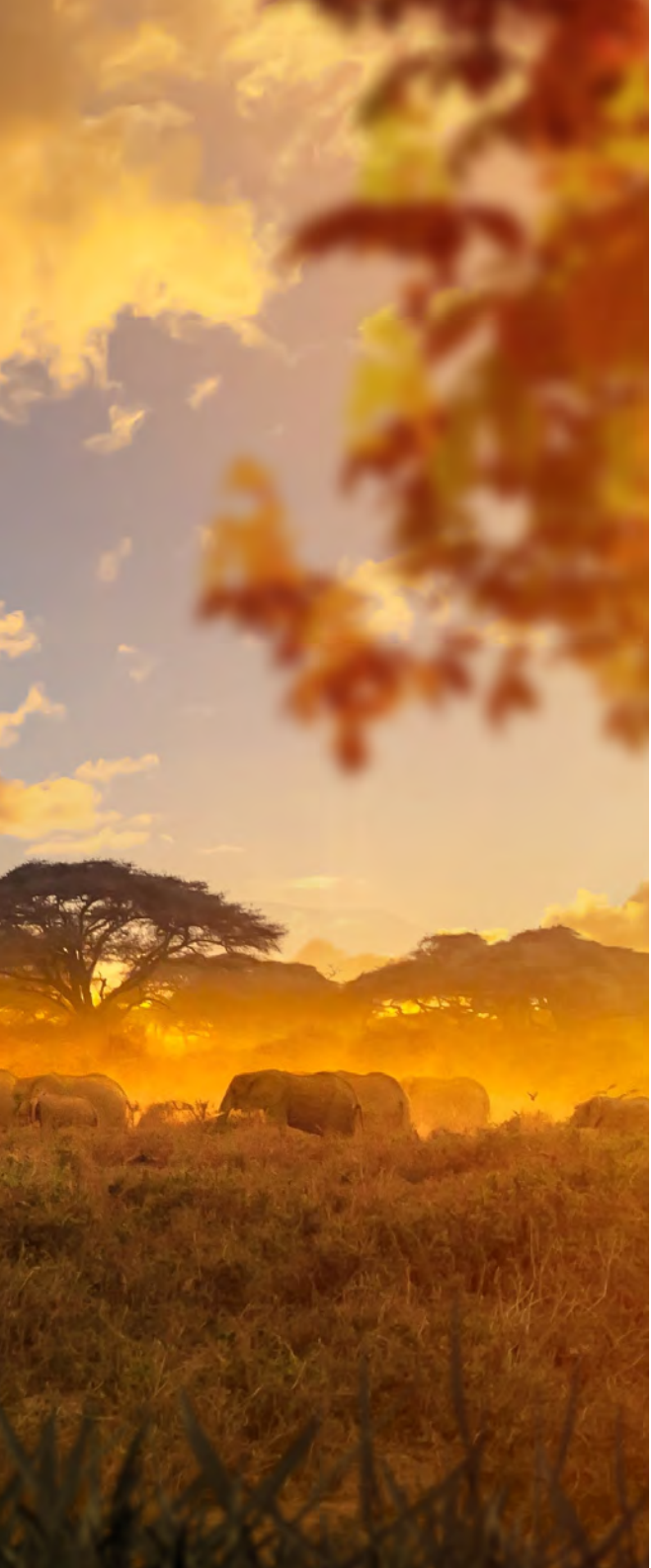
What this ultimately means is that the Middle East is an incubator for innovation and new thinking, precisely because governments actively foster a culture of visionary, positive change. This creates a fertile ground for groundbreaking, disruptive solutions in ways not freely available elsewhere.

MARIO MORBY
Chief Strategy Officer, MENA Ogilvy

Ogilvy



SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA



When we compare how the world sees this region with how the region sees itself, it's difficult to believe that we're talking about the same places.

It should be noted that only four countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are included in the Best Countries study this year, so we are providing a snapshot of regional perceptions. The countries included are Kenya, South Africa, Ghana and Cameroon.

Our data suggests that most people outside the region have little detailed knowledge of most of these countries, with the exception of South Africa, and that what they do know is largely limited to sporting results.

The region's countries are not yet known outside Sub-Saharan Africa for having strong consumer brands, and the perceived strengths of each country among fairly local audiences have not yet translated beyond the region.

While these countries' athletes win headlines for long-distance running, rugby and football, they generate less attention beyond the region for economic and social development, or attributes such as Entrepreneurship and Agility – despite a strong sense within the region that they have these strengths in abundance.



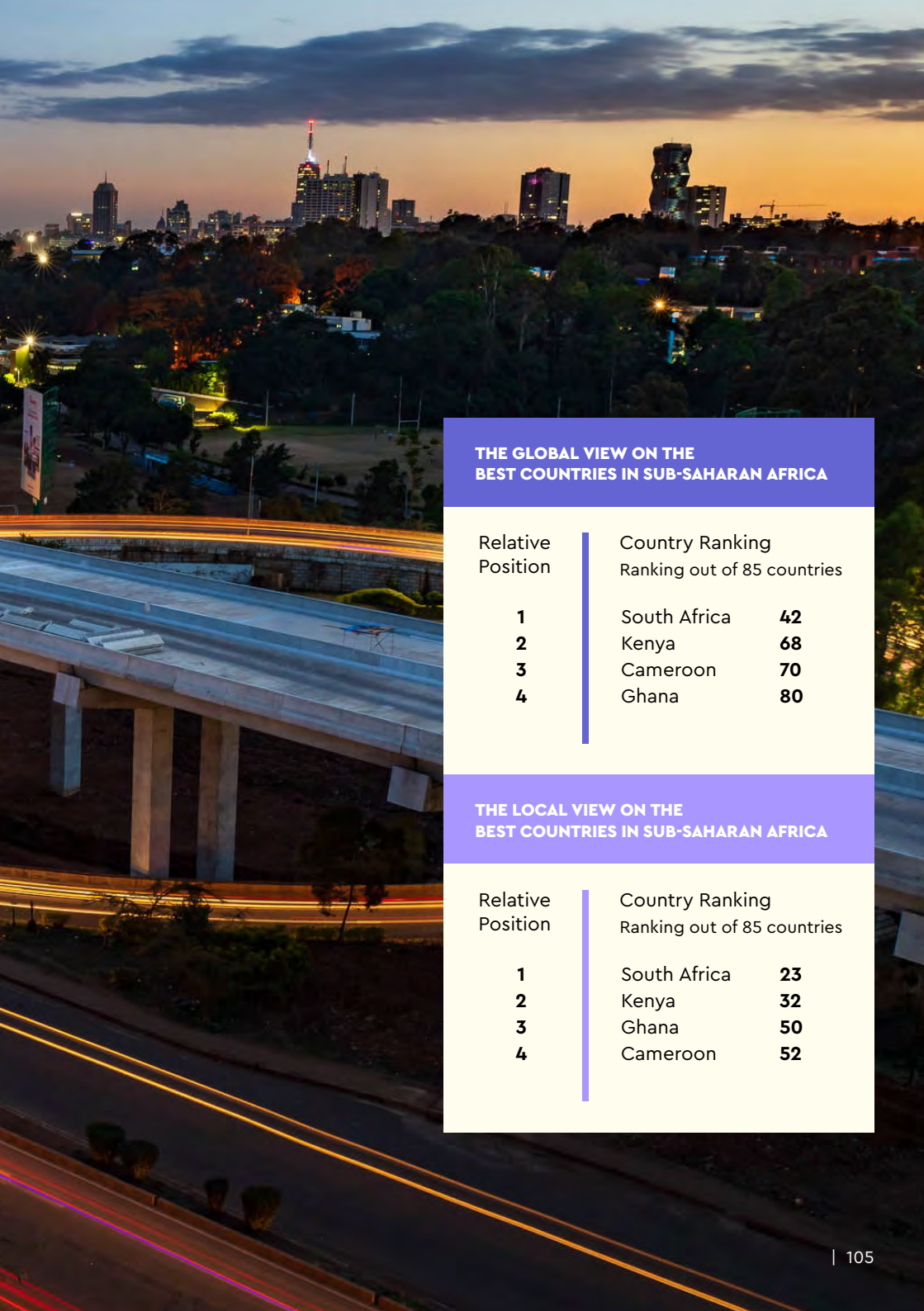
Overall, Sub-Saharan African countries place between 18 and 36 places higher when ranked by a local audience than by global respondents. Kenya has the most extreme difference, placing #32 out of 85 countries according to a local audience, and #68 by the rest of the world.

The biggest perception gap is around the Quality of Life; levels of safety, stability, and suitability for raising a family are much higher within the region than the external perception. Respondents in the region also rate these countries as much happier than the outside world does; Kenya and South Africa rate among the top 10 happiest countries in the world to Best Countries respondents in Africa, but rank in the bottom third of 85 countries for a global audience.

Business transparency and the standard of infrastructure in all four countries is far more positively viewed by a local audience than by global respondents, as are several other key signals of economic progress and maturity. The gaps suggest a lack of international awareness of current conditions in these markets.

Kenya, for instance, recently saw telecommunications giant Safaricom top 50 million customers, and revealed the continent's first AI policy. Regional respondents rank the country as #64 in the world for having well-developed digital infrastructure; globally, it ranks 75th out of 85 countries.

Similarly, Ghana ranks 30 places higher overall on Best Countries among a local audience thanks to much higher regard within the region for the country's cultural influence, adaptability, education system and the skills of its labour force. Outsiders see it as a country bogged down by bureaucracy and lacking economic stability; within Africa, respondents see things more positively, reflecting steady GDP growth and slowing inflation.

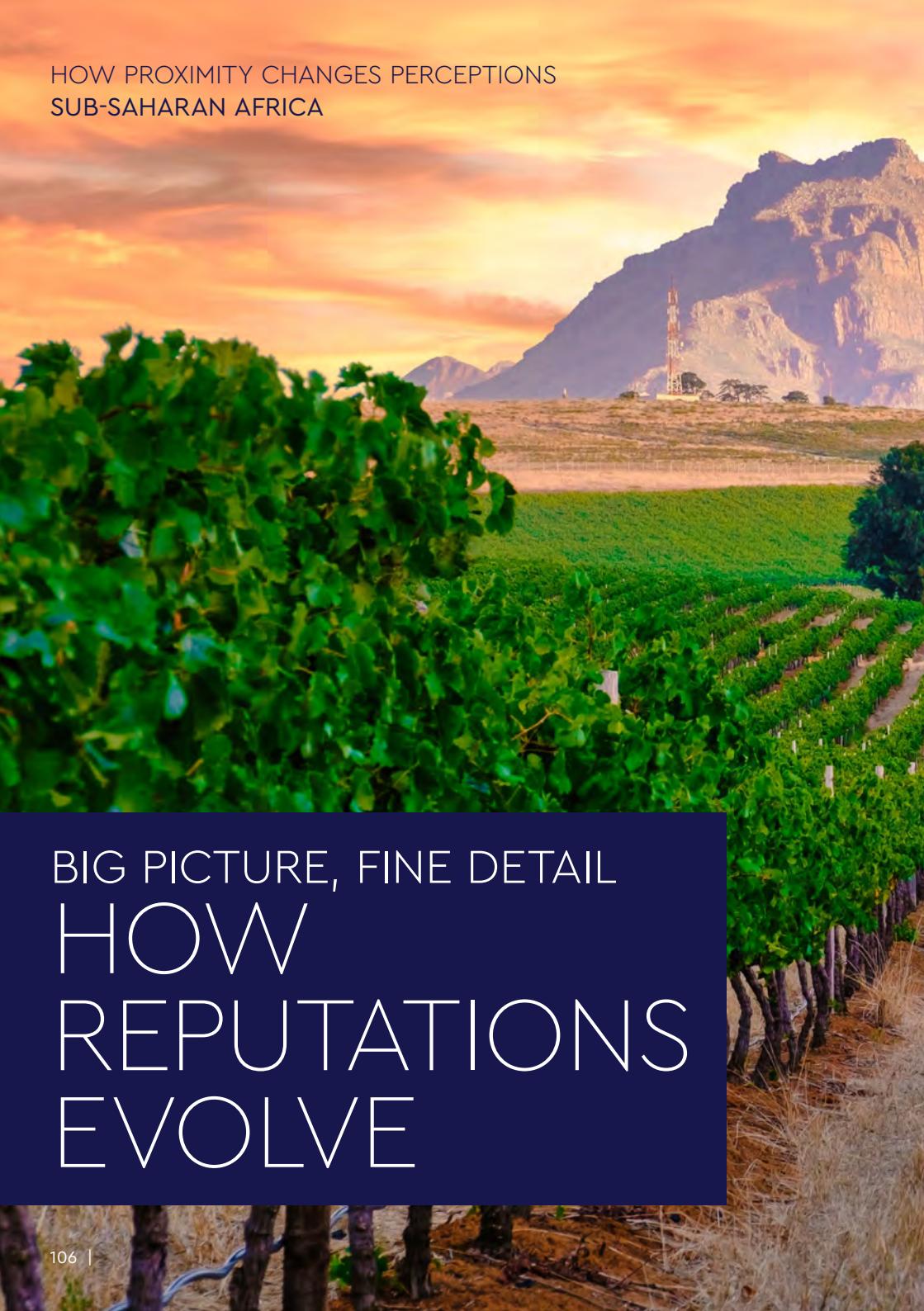


THE GLOBAL VIEW ON THE BEST COUNTRIES IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Relative Position	Country Ranking Ranking out of 85 countries	
1	South Africa	42
2	Kenya	68
3	Cameroon	70
4	Ghana	80

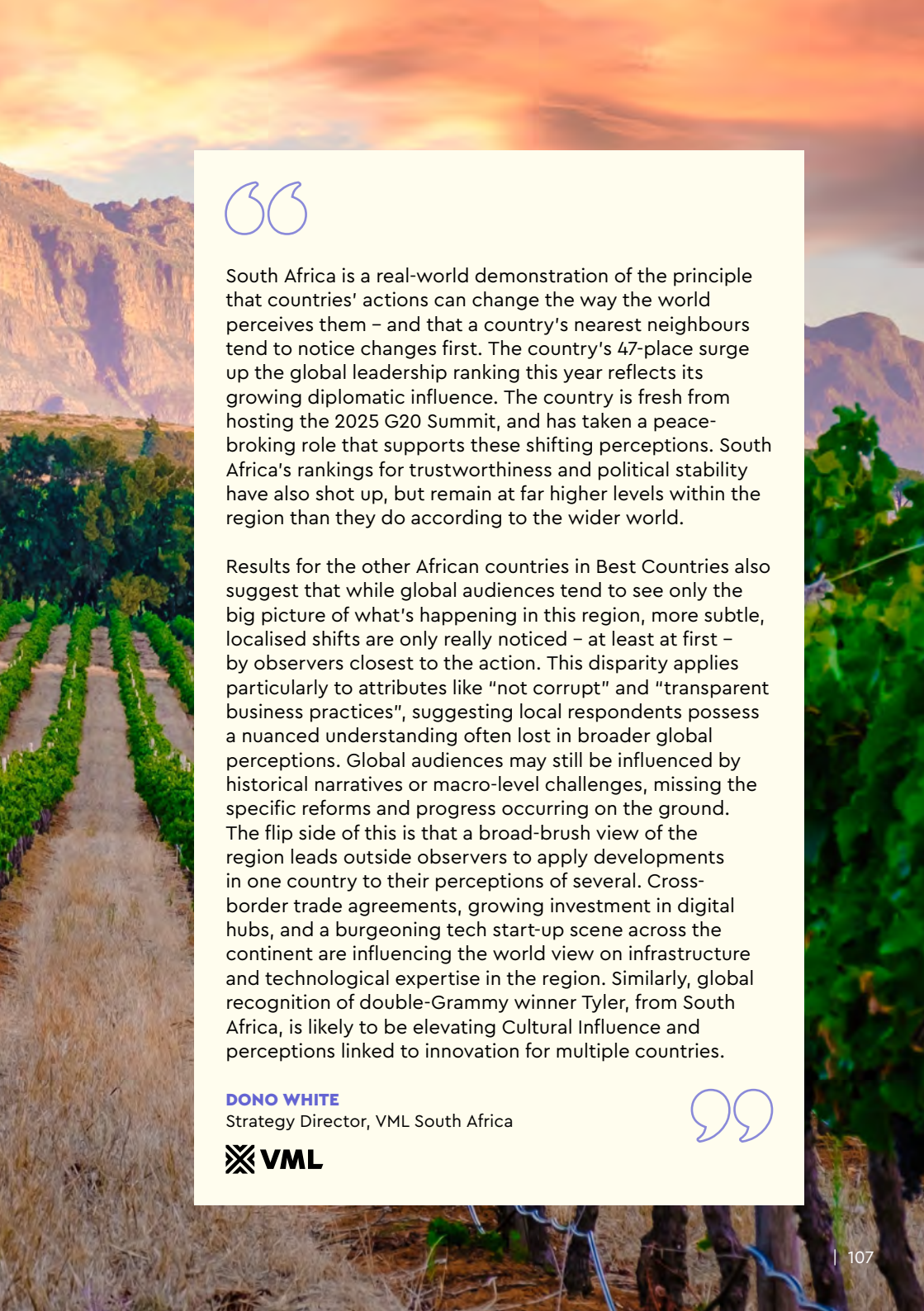
THE LOCAL VIEW ON THE BEST COUNTRIES IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Relative Position	Country Ranking Ranking out of 85 countries	
1	South Africa	23
2	Kenya	32
3	Ghana	50
4	Cameroon	52



BIG PICTURE, FINE DETAIL

HOW REPUTATIONS EVOLVE



South Africa is a real-world demonstration of the principle that countries' actions can change the way the world perceives them – and that a country's nearest neighbours tend to notice changes first. The country's 47-place surge up the global leadership ranking this year reflects its growing diplomatic influence. The country is fresh from hosting the 2025 G20 Summit, and has taken a peace-broking role that supports these shifting perceptions. South Africa's rankings for trustworthiness and political stability have also shot up, but remain at far higher levels within the region than they do according to the wider world.

Results for the other African countries in Best Countries also suggest that while global audiences tend to see only the big picture of what's happening in this region, more subtle, localised shifts are only really noticed – at least at first – by observers closest to the action. This disparity applies particularly to attributes like "not corrupt" and "transparent business practices", suggesting local respondents possess a nuanced understanding often lost in broader global perceptions. Global audiences may still be influenced by historical narratives or macro-level challenges, missing the specific reforms and progress occurring on the ground. The flip side of this is that a broad-brush view of the region leads outside observers to apply developments in one country to their perceptions of several. Cross-border trade agreements, growing investment in digital hubs, and a burgeoning tech start-up scene across the continent are influencing the world view on infrastructure and technological expertise in the region. Similarly, global recognition of double-Grammy winner Tyler, from South Africa, is likely to be elevating Cultural Influence and perceptions linked to innovation for multiple countries.

DONO WHITE
Strategy Director, VML South Africa

VML



EUROPE



The countries of Europe are highly regarded across a range of measures by consumers the world over. They account for six of the top 10 Best Countries overall this year, and 11 of the top 20.

Europeans tend to rate the countries of Europe even more highly than the global audience does, and rank nearby countries higher for Agility, Entrepreneurship, Quality of Life and even for having better food than global respondents perceive them to offer.

The big difference between global and regional opinion is in which of these European countries is the best of the best. Globally, the view is it's Switzerland, but within the region, there's a preference for Norway and Sweden, with Switzerland behind them.

Norway is particularly highly regarded by Europeans for being distinctive, a leader, for having a favourable tax environment, and for being a fun place with great food. These are all qualities for which Norway ranks much higher in the region than it does according to a global audience.

HOW PROXIMITY CHANGES PERCEPTIONS
EUROPE

Some of the other big differences in perception include a 53-place gap on how bureaucratic Slovenia is seen to be (the regional perspective is the more positive one). Lithuania ranks 47 places higher on its commitment to social justice, and Latvia is 46 places higher for adaptability when ranked regionally rather than globally.

The Netherlands performs slightly better overall globally than it does regionally; global respondents rate the country far higher than those outside the region for its scenery, for having a pleasant climate, for having geographical attractions, and for being trendy.

Globally as well as locally, European countries are generally seen as places where life is good and work gets done well. They are not viewed as cheap places to visit or for inexpensive manufacturing, but there's a widespread belief that these countries are economically robust, respect property rights, and have dependable infrastructure. Many also carry an aura of prestige associated either with a rich culture and history, or associations with food and fashion.



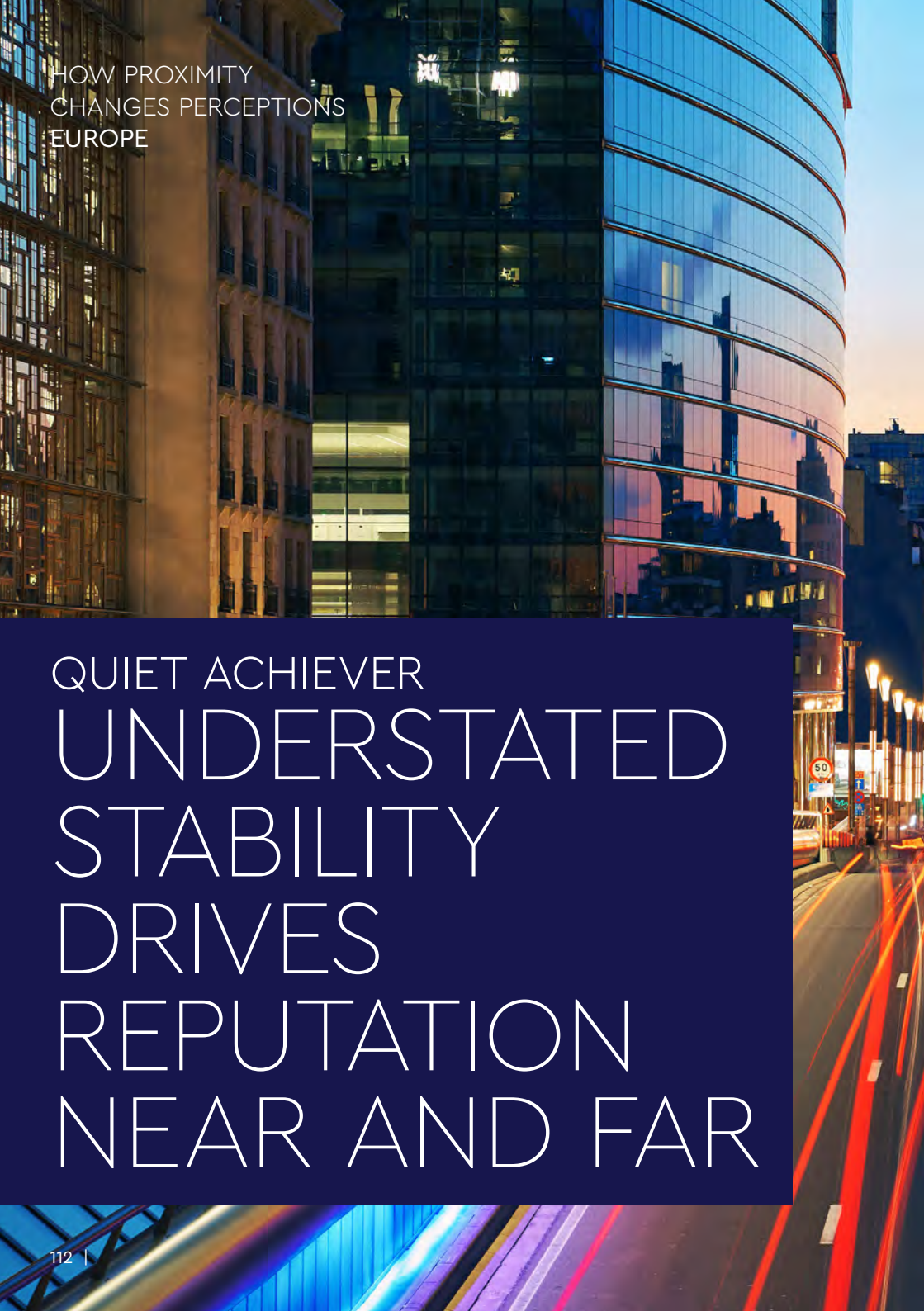


THE GLOBAL VIEW ON THE BEST COUNTRIES IN MENA

Relative Position	Country	Country Ranking (Ranking out of 85 countries)
1	Switzerland	1
2	Sweden	3
3	Germany	6
4	Netherlands	7
5	United Kingdom	8
6	Norway	9
7	Finland	16
8	Denmark	17
9	Italy	18
10	France	19

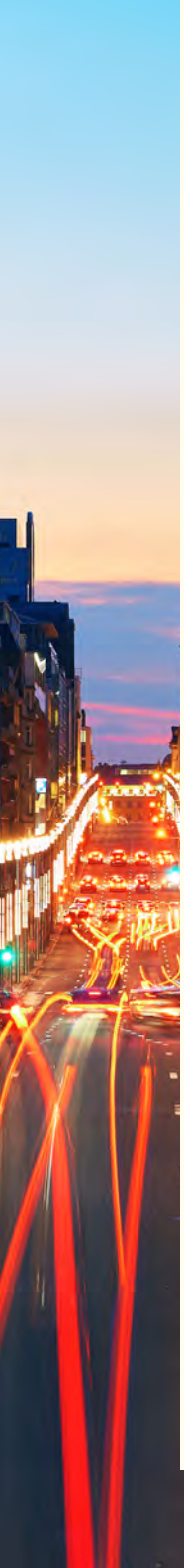
THE LOCAL VIEW ON THE BEST COUNTRIES IN MENA

Relative Position	Country	Country Ranking (Ranking out of 85 countries)
1	Norway	2
2	Sweden	3
3	Switzerland	4
4	Finland	5
5	United Kingdom	9
6	Netherlands	10
7	Denmark	11
8	Luxembourg	12
9	Germany	13
10	Belgium	17



QUIET ACHIEVER

UNDERSTATED STABILITY DRIVES REPUTATION NEAR AND FAR



Belgium emerges as a consistently strong and credible performer on Best Countries, up two places overall this year, to #21. Among respondents within Europe, it ranks even higher, at #17. While the country is often portrayed as modest and understated on the global stage, the data reveals a solid foundation of trust, social responsibility and economic capability that positions Belgium among Europe's most dependable nations. These insights really matter.

Much of Belgium's reputation is built on the institutional quality and social balance it's seen to offer. The country performs particularly well on indicators linked to governance, fairness and societal purpose — dimensions that increasingly matter in a context of geopolitical uncertainty and economic transition. In perception terms, Belgium is seen as stable, ethical and well-managed, attributes that strengthen its attractiveness for investors, talent and international partnerships.

Compared with the Netherlands, Belgium may score slightly lower on agility and innovation metrics, but it holds its own through consistency and reliability. While the Dutch benefit from a reputation for being more dynamic, Belgium's strengths lie in long-term trustworthiness and social cohesion, qualities that can be equally valuable in sustaining economic resilience and political stability.

Comparison with France further highlights Belgium's positive positioning. Although France retains stronger global cultural influence and prestige, Belgium often performs as well as — or better than — its larger neighbour in perceptions of governance quality, everyday business climate, and social responsibility. This suggests that Belgium's reputation is built less on symbolism and more on tangible performance and credibility. Belgians would certainly agree with this.

Overall, the rankings portray Belgium as a quiet achiever: a country that may not dominate headlines but delivers substance, stability and societal strength. In an era where predictability and responsible governance are increasingly prized, Belgium's understated model could prove to be a strategic advantage rather than a limitation. We are open for business!

GIO CANINI
Country Manager, WPP Belgium

WPP

EXPLORE THE WORLD

Start your journey by visiting:
https://wppbav.com/best-countries/

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WHAT IS BAV?

WPP BAV is the world's leading authority on data-driven brand building. We pioneered the study of brands over 30 years ago, and remain the global gold standard. We have studied over 67,000 brands in 53 markets using consistent metrics developed in partnership with top-tier academic institutions. Whether we're exploring a brand's strengths and weaknesses, building a springboard for brand transformation, or identifying game-changing strategic brand partnerships, we bring data to the branding opinion party.

www.wppbav.com

Writing: Jo Bowman

COMING TO A

City

NEAR YOU!



SHOP RIGHT THERE!

A country's reputation reflects the culture of its best-known cities, and one of the most vivid expressions of a city's character is its retail scene.

That's why Smollan have created The Smollan Retail Guide: London, a compendium of shops and shopping streets from across the capital that deliver outstanding physical retail experiences.

The shops we feature reflect over three centuries of retail diversity and energy in a way that's truly 'London' – heritage and the cutting edge side by side.

The Smollan Retail Guide: London is your roadmap for outstanding retail in London... and a reason to fall in love with physical shopping all over again.

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