

How will COVID-19 impact global immigration trends - the expert view

Expert views on how governments and migrants will respond to the COVID-19 crisis. Who will be the winners and who will be the losers.

LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM, June 30, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- COVID-19 will have an impact on global immigration. We talked to three experts to see how governments and migrants will respond to the new reality.



COVID-19 will impact how migrants think about their chosen countries.

Alison Johnson of [Where Can I Live](#)

says, "Like all global crises, COVID-19 will have huge impacts on immigration. There will be economic impacts and political and social reactions to the virus. An early example is the Chinese government warning to its nationals looking to take up a [student visa in Australia](#)."

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In 2019, 1 in 30 people lived in a country other than that in which they were born. The immigration policies of countries have changed in response to local, regional, and worldwide events over time. And, there is no doubt that COVID-19 will impact global migration going forward.

Rodolfo José Santos, of FS Legal in Lisbon, Portugal, agrees that there will be significant changes in coming years. "We're seeing more interest from areas like Asia and the

US. In Portugal's favour has been the effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic to date. But, the government will have to focus on digitalization and become less bureaucratic to continue to attract the best migrants."

As the virus response impacts economies, there is no doubt that countries will rethink which migrants they want to attract to their countries. Dr Hussain Farooq, of HF Corporation, explains. "After the GFC in 2007-2008, a range of countries across the world launched "golden visa" or

citizenship by investment programs. These programs aimed at bona fide investors to attract capital for economic recovery. As well as established programs like Portugal and some Caribbean counties, newer programs like Turkey have also become popular. Turkey issued 6,000 investor visas in the 18 months to February 2020. There is no doubt that this will continue."



The corona virus will also change the way people feel about immigration.

Other countries will likely be watching the economy building investment these programs generate. While golden visa programs have attracted controversy in some quarters, there is no doubt that they can provide a boost to a struggling economy. Rodolfo José Santos, "There had been rumours of changes to Portugal's golden visa program with new limitations on areas of investment. Most industry insiders agree that any changes seem very unlikely now."

There may well be a shift in the favoured programs with investors. Access to the SCHENGEN Area has long been a big drawcard for Portugal, Spain, and some Caribbean counties. If COVID-19 impacts freedom of movement and work, then these programs may become less attractive. Political and social changes in several countries have people reassessing where they want to live and do business. COVID-19 will undoubtedly speed up some of those decisions.

Other classes of visa programs that promote economic growth include startup visas, income visas, and retirement visas. It would not be a surprise to see governments around the world refine and expand these programs. Startup visa programs, especially, have been slow to gain traction in many counties. But, the attraction of rapidly scaling companies that can generate employment will be on the radar of many governments.

On the reverse side, there will no doubt be additional restrictions on foreign workers and skilled migration. Already in the US, changes are being made to the [H1-B program](#). There will be a slow down on new visas being issued, and the government may also make life difficult for existing visa holders. This short-term protectionism will spread. Some of the world's largest and most influential companies rely on migrant worker programs, like the USA's H1-B. However, these programs and other skilled migration schemes will face renewed pressure across the globe. There is no doubt that large companies will push back against these changes. Who is successful will make for compelling politics against the backdrop of a COVID-19 recession.

Alison Johnson sees significant disruption coming. "As we see the impacts of COVID-19 across immigration policies, there will be opportunities for countries to attract talent, capital, and ideas.

Those countries that see this as an opportunity will be able to boost their economies and to take advantage of the disruption ahead. Those that do not will certainly be left behind."

The way that countries respond to COVID-19 is also colouring how potential immigrants see them. The success of New Zealand's response has made it an even more attractive destination. For retirees, South America and Central America may be off the list until an effective COVID-19 vaccine is in wide circulation.

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