
The World's Most Talent Competitive Countries, 2023



By Bruno Lanvin and L. Felipe Monteiro , INSEAD

The tenth anniversary edition of the Global Talent Competitiveness Index reveals changing attitudes and persistent trends.

A country's talent is its powerhouse. Attracting, developing and retaining skilled individuals isn't just a strategy – it shapes a nation's success in the global arena.

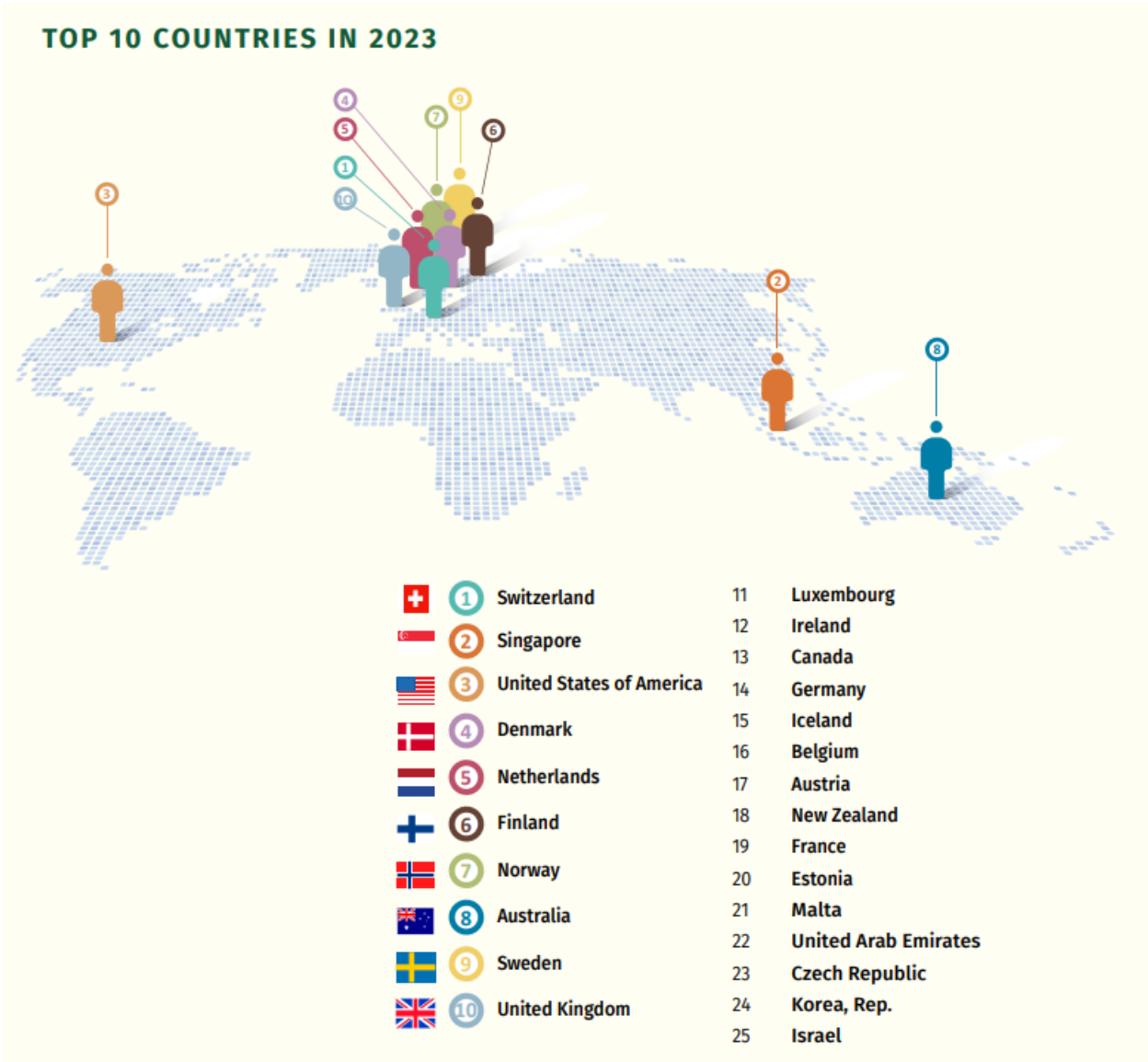
For ten years, the [Global Talent Competitiveness Index](#) (GTCI) has evaluated the talent performance of countries, guiding decision makers in shaping policies and practices to boost their competitive edge.

In this year's GTCI rankings comprising 134 countries, Switzerland emerges as the leading nation in cultivating talent, closely followed by Singapore and the United States. Denmark, the Netherlands, Finland, Norway, Australia, Sweden and the United Kingdom complete the rest of the top ten.

See the full results in the video below:

GTCI data from the past decade reveals that Switzerland has maintained its top position for ten consecutive years. Singapore has held second place every year except 2020, and the United States, while somewhat less steady, has predominantly stayed within the top four.

The top ten list has remained remarkably stable over the past ten years, primarily dominated by smaller European countries. This year, European nations also secured 17 positions in the top 25. The most notable change in the top 25 is the absence of Japan, replaced by South Korea for the first time.



All eyes on emerging economies

Over the past decade, we've seen an unwavering link between a country's wealth and its talent competitiveness, with richer economies continuing to outshine poorer economies.

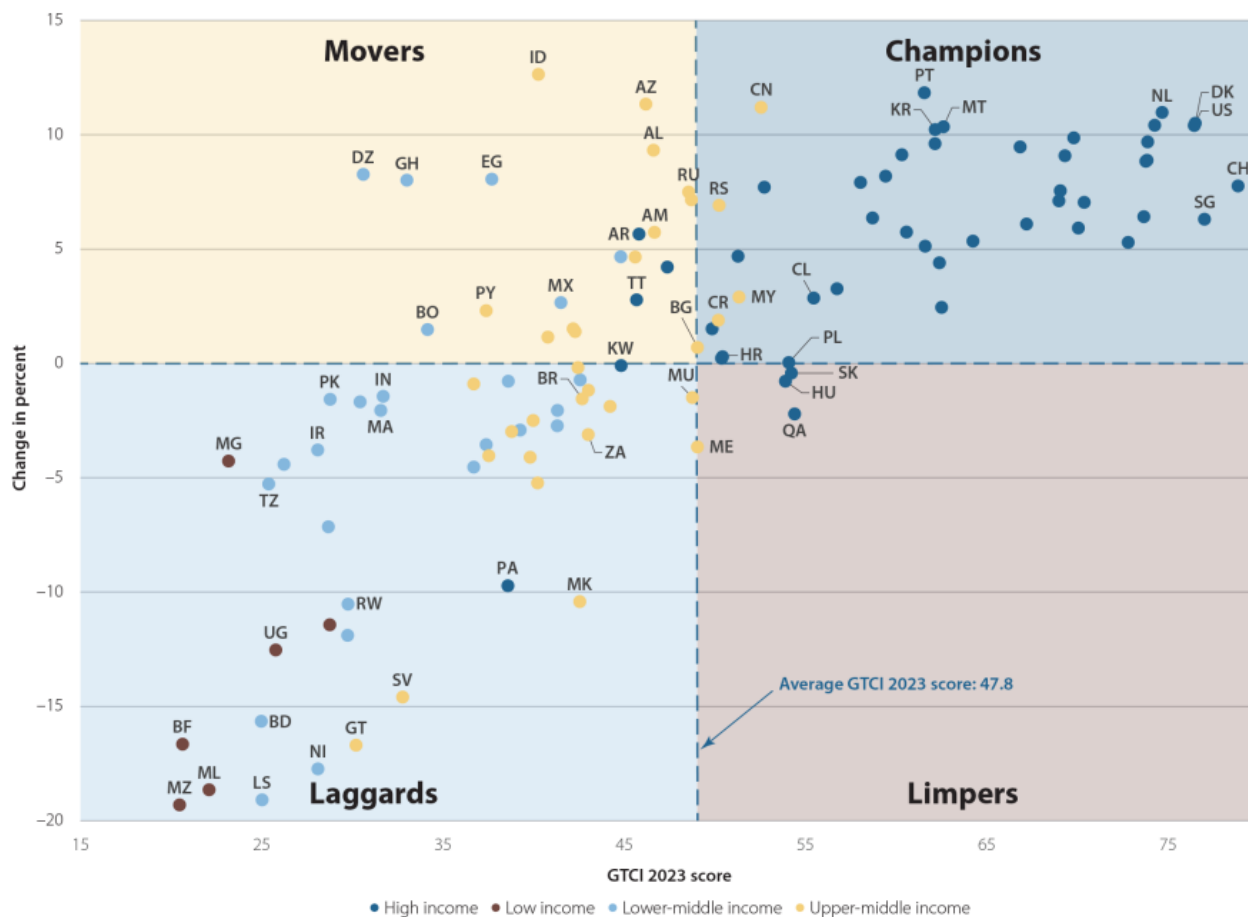
While the global talent scene remains uneven and unequal, the progress made by emerging economies provides reason for optimism. Each year, we assess how talent performance changes over extended periods, categorising countries as talent "champions", "movers", "limpers" or "laggards".

Notably, in the past year, China has risen in the rankings from 47th to 40th place, transitioning from a talent mover to a talent champion. Indonesia maintained its status as a talent mover but has made remarkable strides in talent competitiveness over the past decade. Mexico has shifted from being a talent laggard to a talent mover.

Although Brazil is still among the talent laggards, it has progressed within that quadrant and may well soon shift to becoming a talent mover. All four countries have improved their ability to retain talent.

The proportion of countries from Latin America classified as talent champions has risen from 3 percent in 2020 to 6 percent in 2023. Similarly, Western Asia's representation among the talent champions has increased from 9 percent to 13 percent over the same period.

Change in scores for GTCI 2013–GTCI 2018 vs GTCI 2019–GTCI 2023 and GTCI 2023 score



Note: A complete ISO-2 country code key can be found as part of Figure 12, page 21.

Deepening divides and changing attitudes

Year after year, talent inequalities have persisted within societies. Gender inequalities prove remarkably hard to reduce. GTCI data show significant progress in legal and regulatory environments, whereby an increasing number of countries have committed to reducing gender gaps in labour markets. However, such efforts have been slowed (and sometimes reversed) by Covid-19. Altogether, they remain insufficient and need to be accelerated.

In large parts of the world, our analyses show that **women continue to face unequal pay** and limited career growth. In many poorer and emerging economies, the gender divide is even stronger, as girls struggle to access higher education. While Covid-19 worsened these divides, pushing some to irreversible levels, the post-pandemic recovery may deepen them even further.

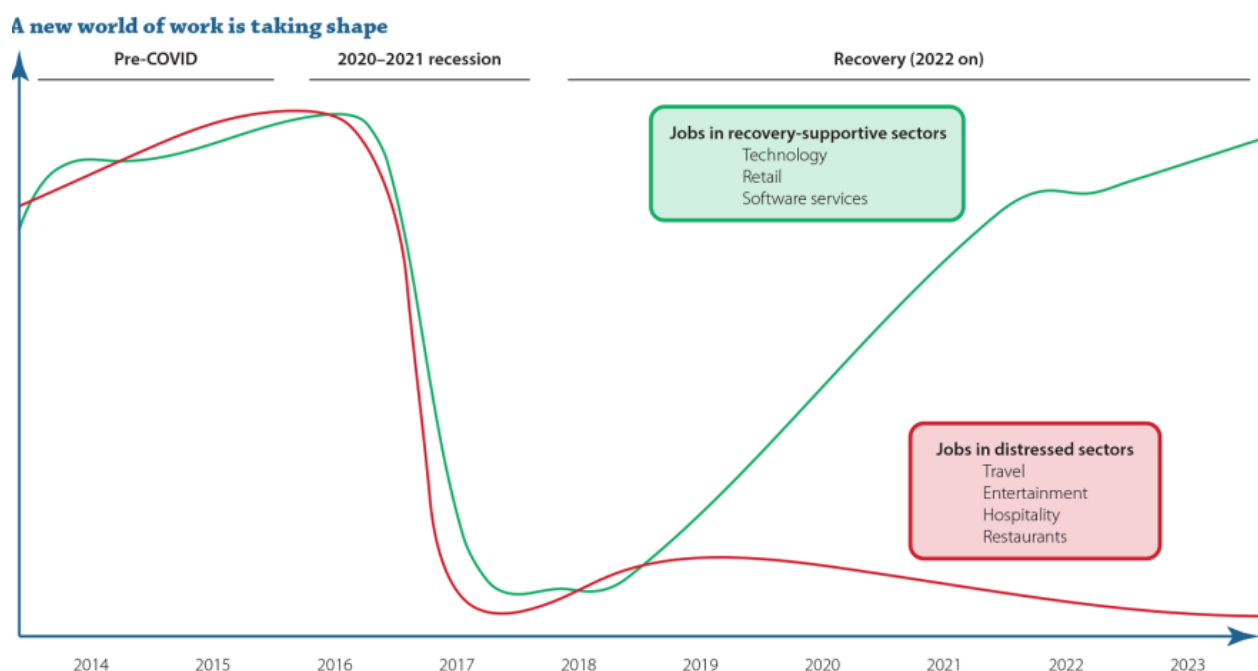
The pandemic years reshaped our global talent landscape in more ways than one. New norms have emerged and are here to stay, including remote and online working. Workers, especially high-skilled individuals, are no longer bound by physical locations and can now choose where they live and work.

We observed that the correlation between a country's quality of life and its talent performance was strong before Covid, and we anticipate that it will only grow stronger in the years ahead.

Before the pandemic, we identified a positive trend of global “brain circulation” – a departure from the concepts of brain drain or brain gain. For national economies and enterprises, it had become advantageous to perceive talent as a fluid resource, benefitting from international exposure.

However, the pandemic disrupted the flow of talent across nations. While travel has resumed, persistent uncertainties and geopolitical tensions continue to hinder direct cooperation and limit the exchange of talent between nations.

The 2021 edition of the GTCI predicted that the post-Covid recovery might follow a “K-shaped” trajectory, deepening inequalities among workers based on their skills. The upper branch of the “K” represents workers in strategic sectors, equipped with future-ready skills, while the lower branch spells a challenging path for less skilled or adaptable workers.



Source: Authors, based on personal communication with Ernie Tedeschi, policy economist at Evercore ISI; Akhtar (2020).

Given this scenario, we assumed that the new generation preparing to enter the workforce would prioritise acquiring high-demand skills and target the most dynamic sectors. Surprisingly, our analyses revealed a different trend. We found a growing proportion of younger individuals more focused on pursuing meaningful work, contributing to positive societal or environmental impacts and achieving a healthier work-life balance.

This shift has also given rise to a new generation of workers for whom the traditional concept of “employee loyalty” has rapidly eroded. An increasing number of workers are opting for gigs, “slashing” and short-term contracts, allowing them the flexibility to work independently and pursue diverse opportunities.

How talent competition will change in the next ten years

In the rapidly changing and uncertain decade ahead, the world of work will further transform, driven by evolving expectations from younger generations, new economic models and emerging technologies like artificial intelligence.

Attracting, growing and retaining talent will gain even more importance as a driver of competitiveness, innovation and geo-political soft power. This will be true for nations, cities and organisations alike.

Consequently, this heightened focus on talent will also fuel fiercer competition. As uncertainties and international tensions accumulate, we should expect more rather than less talent wars. Domestic labour market challenges and rising nationalism will further intensify these battles, in particular around immigration policies.

Cities and regions will stand as pioneers in this evolving scenario. Through our Global City Talent Competitiveness Index, we've witnessed the rise of new talent hubs in cities and how core issues such as sustainability, innovation and talent have largely shifted from national to local governments. Looking ahead, we anticipate that cities and regions will pioneer new talent and innovation strategies.

Over the next ten years, skills and education will remain vital tools to empower workers to make meaningful contributions to their economies and societies. It is our responsibility to build an inclusive global workforce, ensuring equal opportunities for all to contribute towards creating a fairer

and more sustainable world.

While these are only predictions, in the last ten years, the GTCI has often anticipated patterns before they unfolded. Stay tuned to witness how these emerging trends might reshape the world of work as we know it.

Video edited by Abdelouakil Mustapha.

Find article at

<https://knowledge.insead.edu/career/worlds-most-talent-competitive-countries-2023>

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