



Global Mobility On Hold



About

This report covers the state of **Global Mobility** in Q1 2021 and highlights the biggest shifts in **passport power** due to the pandemic.

Empowered by Arton Capital, the Passport Index is the world's most popular global mobility intelligence platform providing interactive travel requirements and the ability to compare, rank and improve the power of passports.



ARTON CAPITAL
*Empowering Global Citizenship**

Methodology

The Passport Index methodology is based on the following:

- Passports of 193 United Nations member countries and 6 territories (ROC Taiwan, Macao (SAR China), Hong Kong (SAR China), Kosovo, Palestinian Territory and the Vatican) for a total of 199 are considered.
- Territories annexed to other countries such as Norfolk Island (Australia), French Polynesia (France), British Virgin Islands (Britain), etc. who do not issue their own passports are excluded and not considered as destinations.
- Countries which issue passports, regardless if they enforce independent visa policies or not are considered as destinations.
- Data is based on official information provided by governments, updated in real-time with intelligence obtained through crowdsourcing and enhanced with proprietary research from highly credible sources.
- To determine the individual rank of each passport, a three-tier method is applied:
 1. Mobility Score (MS) – includes visa-free (VF), visa on arrival (VOA), eTA and eVisa (if issued within 3 days)
 2. VF portion of their score vs VOA
 3. United Nations Development Programme Human Development Index 2018 (UNDP HDI) is used as a tie breaker. The UNDP HDI is a significant measure on the country's perception abroad.

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Of all the books in the world,
the best stories are found between
the pages of a passport.

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Introduction

2020 was the year of lost travel plans. Prompting many to think that 2021 would be the year that makes up for it. But after diligent analysis of data collected from Passport Index throughout the start of 2021— the reality of global mobility paints a different picture.

The world is in fact slowly reopening, but not at the pace many hoped for. While strict safety protocols and regulations continue to be part of the norm; people are still hesitant to cross borders in fear of a new wave, while many governments are not making the process any easier either. At least, not yet.

From discussions about new vaccine passports to no-touch biometric collection at airports, the call for innovation has only grown louder. It is now up to airlines, airports and governments to strategize and create a new and responsible, sustainable, and improved model of travel that will enhance the security, confidence, and experience for all travelers moving forward.

The future of travel on hold

After experiencing what was deemed the biggest drop of World Openness in history, as WOS dropped 65% from its all-time high of 21,360, to its all-time low, of 12,994 in May 2019— we knew there could only be up from here. 1.7% up that is.

In fact, by December 31st, 2020; when the first wave of the pandemic started wearing off, the WOS had gone up to 15,400; a 19% jump. It has since has settled to 15,662.

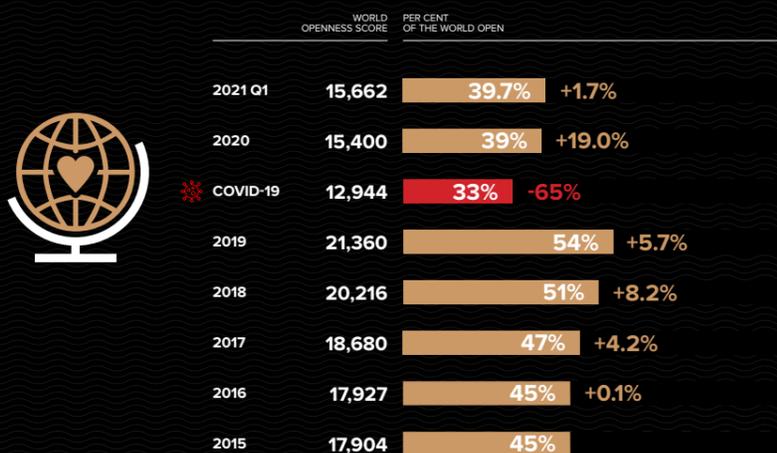
What this is telling us, is that although global mobility will return, it will take time. A new era of travel is upon us — one that is centered around a sustainable and responsible model of mobility.

Safety has rightly been the top priority for many people and will continue to be a vital point once normal travel returns. More and more governments are considering adopting new practices and regulations that will enable international travel to become a safe and sustainable experience for both visitors and their local population.

The Global Mobility Barometer 2021 Q1



The World Openness Score 2021 Q1

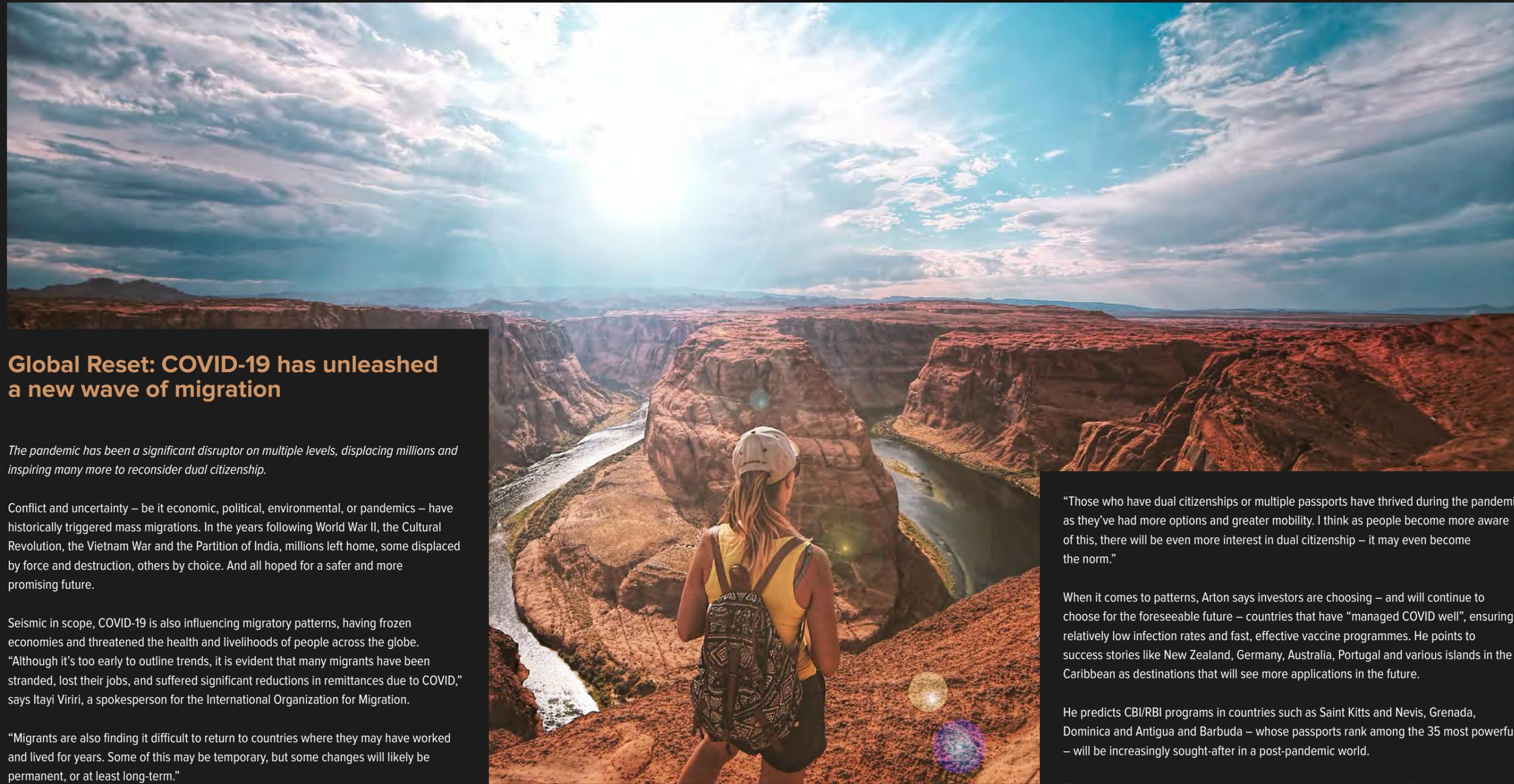


Big moves to start the quarter

Taking advantage of the stagnation in global mobility and appearing at the very bottom of the passport ranks, Iraq granted visa-on-arrival to citizens of over 30 countries, including the United States, United Kingdom, European Union states, Russia, China and other economic powerhouses such as Japan, South Korea, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Switzerland.

Meanwhile, Russia was planning on following suit by issuing visa on arrivals to nearly 50 countries but by order of the Government of the Russian Federation the processing of visas were suspended in order to ensure state security, protect public health.

It is evident that in Q1 of 2021, global mobility remains on hold for many passports until further notice, while some use this disadvantage in their favor.



Global Reset: COVID-19 has unleashed a new wave of migration

The pandemic has been a significant disruptor on multiple levels, displacing millions and inspiring many more to reconsider dual citizenship.

Conflict and uncertainty – be it economic, political, environmental, or pandemics – have historically triggered mass migrations. In the years following World War II, the Cultural Revolution, the Vietnam War and the Partition of India, millions left home, some displaced by force and destruction, others by choice. And all hoped for a safer and more promising future.

Seismic in scope, COVID-19 is also influencing migratory patterns, having frozen economies and threatened the health and livelihoods of people across the globe. “Although it’s too early to outline trends, it is evident that many migrants have been stranded, lost their jobs, and suffered significant reductions in remittances due to COVID,” says Itayi Viriri, a spokesperson for the International Organization for Migration.

“Migrants are also finding it difficult to return to countries where they may have worked and lived for years. Some of this may be temporary, but some changes will likely be permanent, or at least long-term.”

In March 2020 alone, The World Bank recorded the largest migration in South Asia since partition, with foreign workers in places like Europe, the Gulf and North America returning home in what experts have dubbed the the “Great Reverse Migration.”

Citizens from wealthy countries who hold traditionally powerful passports have also experienced a “global reset,” says Armand Arton, founder and president of Arton Capital. And in the face of unprecedented restrictions on travel and migration, mobility has become more valuable than ever.

“Those who have dual citizenships or multiple passports have thrived during the pandemic as they’ve had more options and greater mobility. I think as people become more aware of this, there will be even more interest in dual citizenship – it may even become the norm.”

When it comes to patterns, Arton says investors are choosing – and will continue to choose for the foreseeable future – countries that have “managed COVID well”, ensuring relatively low infection rates and fast, effective vaccine programmes. He points to success stories like New Zealand, Germany, Australia, Portugal and various islands in the Caribbean as destinations that will see more applications in the future.

He predicts CBI/RBI programs in countries such as Saint Kitts and Nevis, Grenada, Dominica and Antigua and Barbuda – whose passports rank among the 35 most powerful – will be increasingly sought-after in a post-pandemic world.

“Dual citizenships may become the norm in the future,” adds Arton. “In addition to general COVID management, vaccination rates and taxes will also play a role. As governments inject trillions into their economies, the super-wealthy in the US, Europe, Canada anticipate tax increases in the future and may choose to relocate.”



Digital vaccine certificates are here. So what's the hold up?

Vaccine certifications are far from a novel concept. For decades, travelers have carried proof of inoculations against malaria, diphtheria and yellow fever in the form of a small yellow vaccination booklet recognized by the World Health Organization.

Spurred by COVID-19, however, the next generation of vaccination records look and function very differently. For starters, emerging “vaccine passports” act as a digital complement to physical passports, such as a mobile app that contains a unique, readable QR code that links to your COVID-19 testing and vaccination records. Additionally, travelers can print out the QR code, much like a boarding pass.

But why not simply incorporate health data into existing ePassports? Electronic chips inside machine-readable biometric passports, or ePassports, already contain our photos, address, date of issue, date of expiry, nationality, and biometrics like fingerprints and iris patterns. In addition, ePassports contain dozens of security features to prevent forgery and fraud, from holograms to watermarks, anti-scan pattern, invisible fluorescent fibers, optically variable ink and more.

Unfortunately, passport innovation moves at a glacial pace. It took decades to standardize non-biometric machine-readable passports, due to a lack of resources in many countries and the complex web of stakeholders involved.

What's more, the chips inside our passports can only hold so much data – we would need bigger, faster chips that can be updated in real-time to accommodate past travel records as well as testing, and vaccine and variant booster certifications.

And while the technology driving COVID-19 health apps may serve as a catalyst need to take traditional passports digital eventually, we wouldn't count on it anytime soon. In the meantime, dozens of countries, organizations and private tech companies are racing to develop a winning digital vaccine passport.

WORLD'S PASSPORTS IN YOUR POCKET



In February, Iceland and Bahrain launched digital vaccine certificates, followed by China in March. Denmark also plans to unveil a vaccine passport by summer, as does Sweden and several other European countries. Then there's the International Air Transport Association (IATA) Travel Pass, the World Economic Forum's CommonPass, and IBM's Digital Health Pass, among others.

On a regional level, European Union member states agreed on basic data requirements for the EU's vaccine verification system in January, according to Ciara Bottomley, a spokesperson from the European Commission, which will help ensure the certificates' security and authenticity. Aiming to have the app ready by summer, the EU is working with the International Civil Aviation Organization and the World Health Organization to test viability.

“This is one of the messiest times for travel. Countries haven't decided on a unified system of verification in terms of COVID tests, let alone vaccines,” says Armand Arton, president and founder of Arton Capital. “Will vaccine passports have to be in the local language? Require digital signatures? Will you have to carry a paper version, too?”

“A global agency, like the World Travel & Tourism Council or the UN's International Civil Aviation Organization, is best placed to take leadership when it comes to setting standards for technology and security on a global level.”

While we wait for international standards to emerge, Arton says many countries will likely establish bilateral travel corridors as a first step towards rebooting mobility. For example, Greece and Israel are set to open a two-way bubble for vaccinated tourists, while Cyprus will accept fully vaccinated British travelers from May 1.

“Local, regional or international vaccine validation systems will help us start the long climb back to 2019's World Openness Score,” says Arton. “International coordination will be very important for returning human mobility and crucial to the world's economic recovery.”



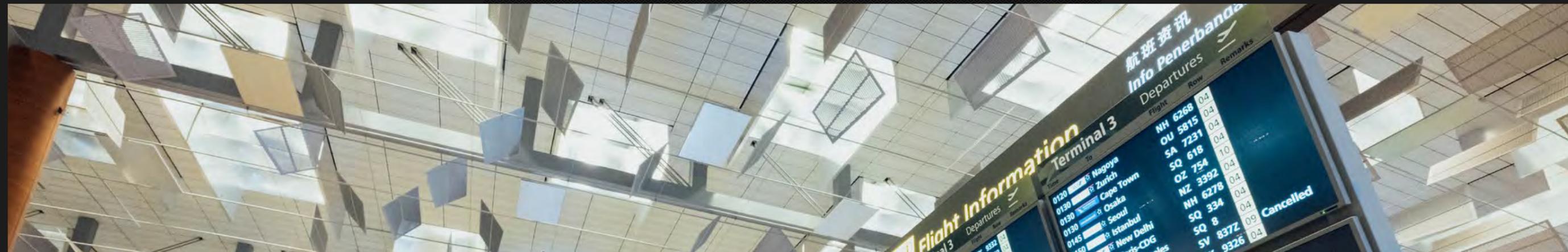
Smartphone screen showing flight status for Luxembourg (172) and Spain (172). Includes a progress bar and a 'Trips' button.

Smartphone screen showing a list of destinations: Magnesian, Albania, Nigeria, Jordan, Angola, and Azerbaijan and Azerbaijan. Includes a 'Trips' button and a 'VISA' button.

Smartphone screen showing flight status for Ecuador (741) and Montenegro (741). Includes a progress bar and a 'Trips' button.

Smartphone screen showing flight status for Canada (741) and Algeria (741). Includes a progress bar and a 'Trips' button.

Smartphone screen showing flight status for United Arab Emirates (779), Finland (172), Germany (172), and Luxembourg (172). Includes a progress bar and a 'Trips' button.



Bans and borders: How might COVID-19 barriers shape the world?

The world was rapidly opening before COVID-19. But now, barriers have restricted freedom of movement for the wealthy and poor alike.

After the Berlin Wall was erected in 1961, those living close to the barricades reported feelings of listlessness, depression, delusions and suicidal thoughts. Psychologist Dr Dietfried Mueller-Hegemann called it “Mauerkrankheit”, or “wall disease” and attributed the symptoms to continuous tension, division, limited freedoms and emotional distress.

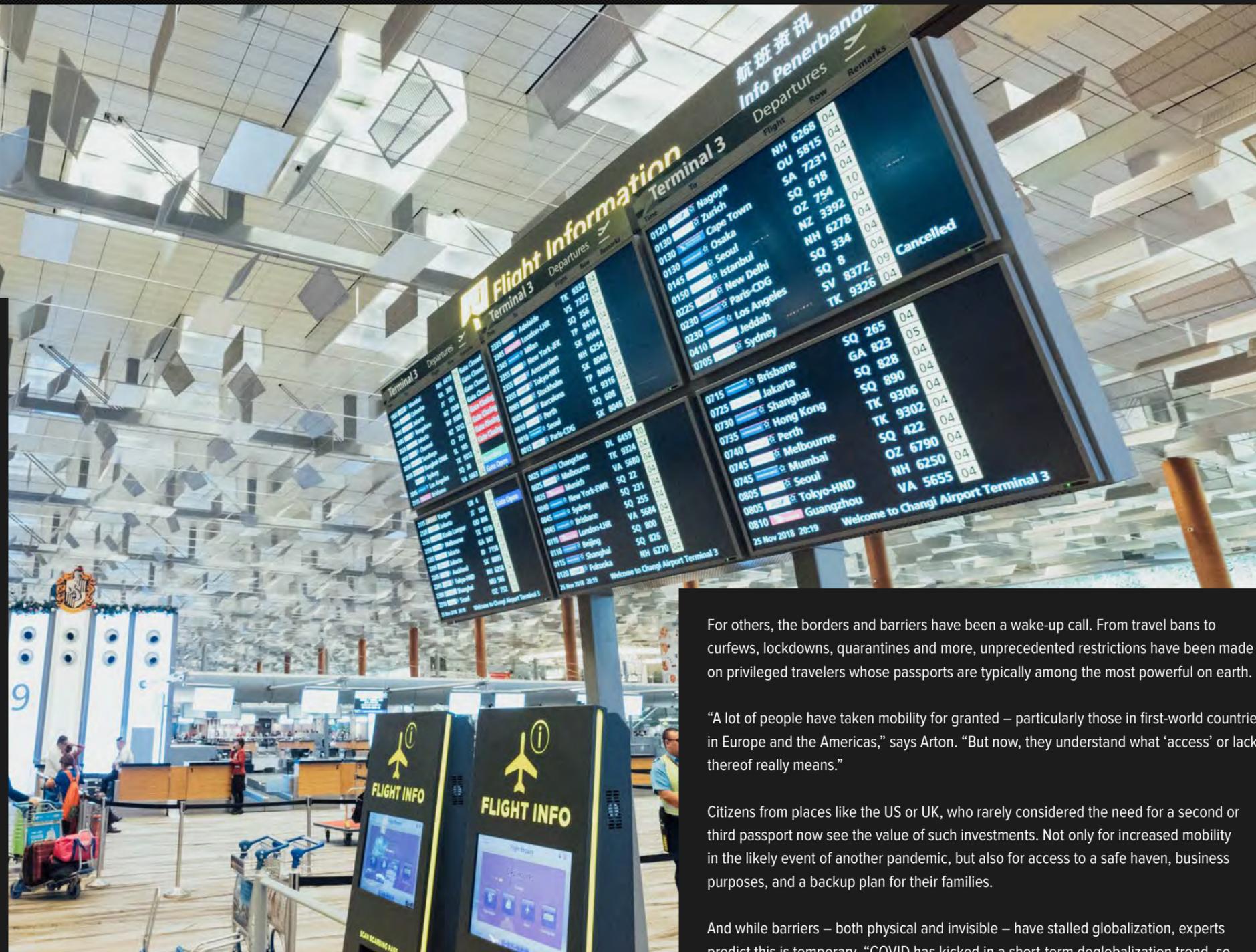
And while psychological scars remained after the wall came down in 1989, the overall wellbeing of Germans gradually improved over time. A 2019 Pew Research Center survey found that adults in both areas, especially East Germans, are happier and more optimistic compared with the same survey conducted two years after the border fell.

In 1991, just 15% of East Germans ranked their life satisfaction at least a 7 out of 10, compared with 59% in 2019. And according to a 2013 study by public health expert Tobias Vogt, the life expectancy of East Germans had extended roughly four years for women and six for men by 2011. “A feeling of liberty, opportunities to travel, all contributed to the well-being of East Germans,” Vogt told *The New Yorker*, adding that access to better healthcare also supported the change.

This begs the question: With more borders, barriers and bans than ever before due to COVID-19, how might they shape our future? For some, particularly refugees, displaced individuals and lower-resourced populations, the restrictions are a continuation – and amplification – of ongoing repression.

Those without identification, of whom there are an estimated 1.1 billion globally, could not travel freely before the pandemic. Meanwhile, passport holders from places like Yemen, Libya, Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran and North Korea have never enjoyed freedom of movement.

Looking to the near future, those who have not been vaccinated may experience similar travel restrictions. “A big portion of the world’s population across Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East will not be vaccinated for a long time, and they will be limited even more than before,” says Armand Arton, president and founder of Arton Capital. “It will really exacerbate rich-poor divides.”



For others, the borders and barriers have been a wake-up call. From travel bans to curfews, lockdowns, quarantines and more, unprecedented restrictions have been made on privileged travelers whose passports are typically among the most powerful on earth.

“A lot of people have taken mobility for granted – particularly those in first-world countries in Europe and the Americas,” says Arton. “But now, they understand what ‘access’ or lack thereof really means.”

Citizens from places like the US or UK, who rarely considered the need for a second or third passport now see the value of such investments. Not only for increased mobility in the likely event of another pandemic, but also for access to a safe haven, business purposes, and a backup plan for their families.

And while barriers – both physical and invisible – have stalled globalization, experts predict this is temporary. “COVID has kicked in a short-term deglobalization trend, so we’re trying to enforce borders and restrict people as a way of controlling the pandemic,” says futurist Thomas Frey, the executive director of the DaVinci Institute. “But the long-term trend is towards a much more fluid society. For several decades, we’ve been creating borderless economies.”

Borders, he predicts, will become increasingly meaningless in the decades to come, describing a future where autonomous drones, air taxis and aircraft will make “jumping over a border be a relatively simple thing”. At the same time, communication will be dramatically faster and more reliable. “In the longer term, all of this will feed into a truly globalized world,” says Frey. “Greater connectivity, not less, is the future.”

Open Sesame: 3 of the most welcoming countries during the pandemic

Willkommen, bienvenue, welcome! From isolated island getaways to glitzy desert oases, these four countries are all open to visitors. But has it come at a cost?

As we enter the second quarter of 2021, the world is still reeling from last year's unprecedented collapse of global mobility. The World Openness Score (WOS) plummeted by 65% to 12,944 during COVID-19, reflecting widespread border closures and tightened visa restrictions. Since then, it's crept back up to 15,661 – still miles away from its 2019 peak of 21,360.

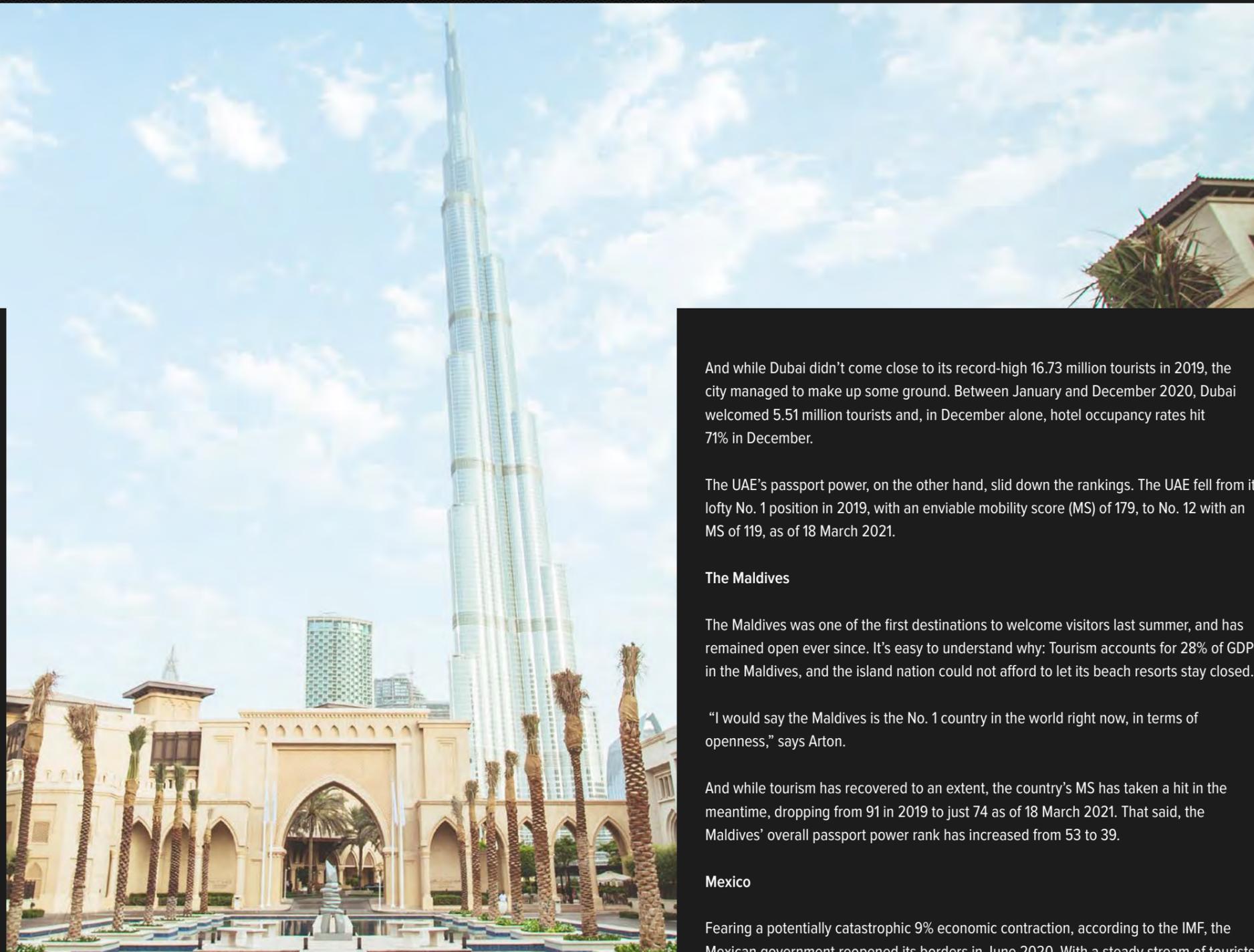
Travel restraints have become the norm, but a handful of countries have veered from the pack, staying open for business and travel. From east to west, we take a look at three of the most welcoming countries based on pandemic tourism policies – and how the decision to stay open correlates with passport power.

“You wouldn't open a border during a pandemic unless you had a good reason, such as tourism, business or politics,” says Armand Arton, Founder and President of Arton Capital. “Staying open will likely impact the passport power of citizens, who could be considered higher risk and thus subject to visa restrictions or travel bans.”

United Arab Emirates

Since July 2020, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), particularly Dubai, has been among the most open destinations, offering refuge to business and leisure travelers from all over the world.

The decisions was driven by necessity: Tourism accounts for roughly 12% of the UAE's GDP, though real estate, trade, and a large expat population also factor in. What's more, S&P Global Rating warned in September 2020 that the city's economy could contract by 11% by the end of last year due to travel restrictions.



And while Dubai didn't come close to its record-high 16.73 million tourists in 2019, the city managed to make up some ground. Between January and December 2020, Dubai welcomed 5.51 million tourists and, in December alone, hotel occupancy rates hit 71% in December.

The UAE's passport power, on the other hand, slid down the rankings. The UAE fell from its lofty No. 1 position in 2019, with an enviable mobility score (MS) of 179, to No. 12 with an MS of 119, as of 18 March 2021.

The Maldives

The Maldives was one of the first destinations to welcome visitors last summer, and has remained open ever since. It's easy to understand why: Tourism accounts for 28% of GDP in the Maldives, and the island nation could not afford to let its beach resorts stay closed.

“I would say the Maldives is the No. 1 country in the world right now, in terms of openness,” says Arton.

And while tourism has recovered to an extent, the country's MS has taken a hit in the meantime, dropping from 91 in 2019 to just 74 as of 18 March 2021. That said, the Maldives' overall passport power rank has increased from 53 to 39.

Mexico

Fearing a potentially catastrophic 9% economic contraction, according to the IMF, the Mexican government reopened its borders in June 2020. With a steady stream of tourists arriving from Canada and the US, infection rates have remained high since last summer.

Still, the gamble may have paid off: in 2020, Mexico was the third most visited place in the world, behind Italy and France. Not only does the Latin American country accept travellers from 68 countries, but there are also virtually no restrictions on arriving visitors. Not even a negative PCR test – the gold standard of COVID screening – is required upon arrival.

At the same time, Mexican passport power has plummeted. On the Passport Index, Mexico ranks 24th with an MS of 92 as of 18 March 2021, marking a dramatic drop from an MS of 150 and a rank of 16 in 2019.

Smile for the camera: How biometrics are changing border crossing

Spurred by COVID-19 and an urge to restore global mobility, contactless biometric immigration channels are emerging as the gold standard for border control.

You're likely used to glancing at a camera to unlock your phone, pay for coffee or access banking apps. But what if you could do the same at check-in, immigration and boarding? That reality is not far off.

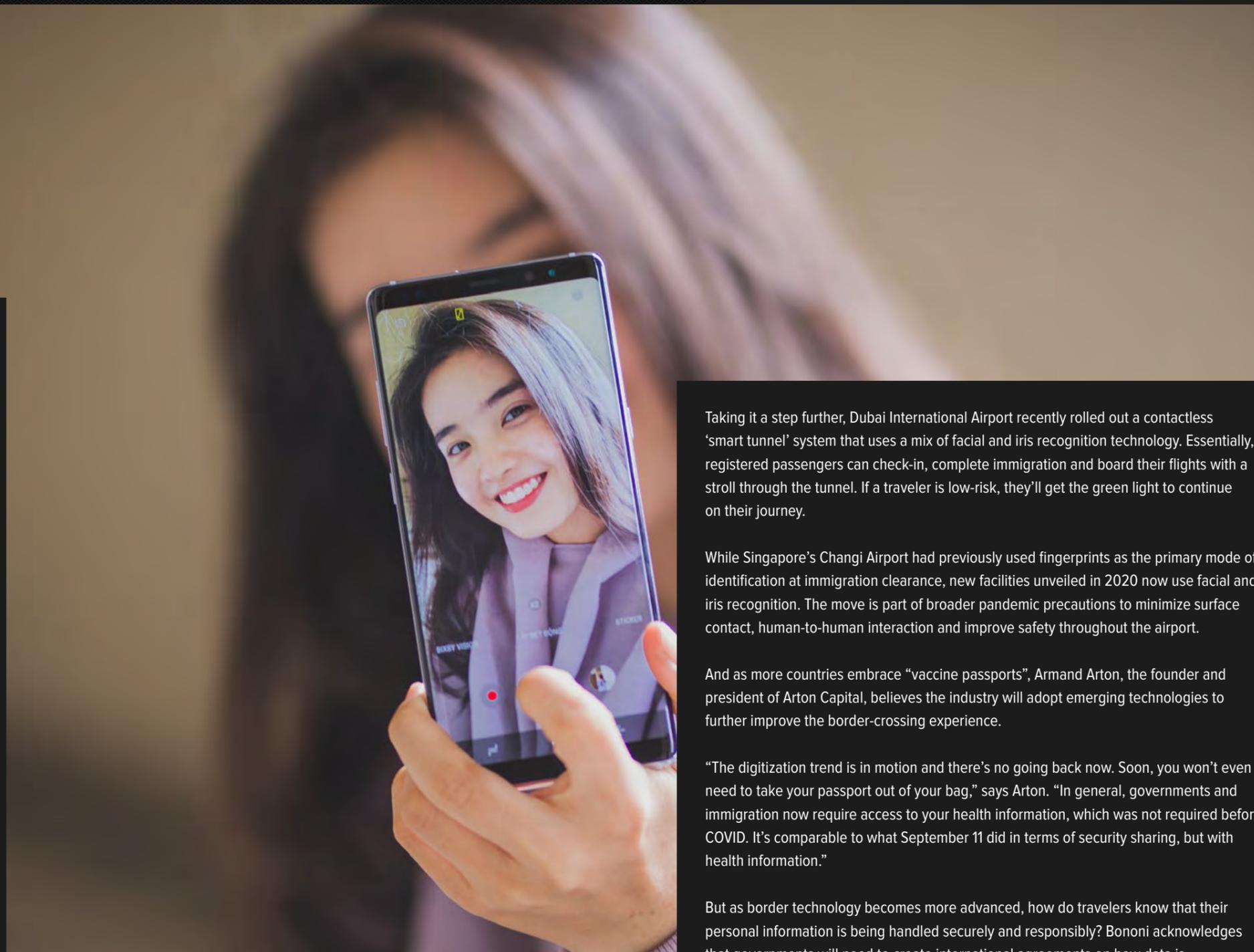
Before COVID-19 devastated the travel industry, automated borders were already on the rise. This shift has been driven in part by necessity: The International Air Transport Association (IATA) forecasts air passenger traffic doubling over the next 20 years, and airports must become more efficient to handle the demand.

In preparation for the growing demand, the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) launched the "Safe & Seamless Traveller Journey Programme" in 2018, which promotes "seamless" end-to-end journeys for both air and non-air travel. In this context, seamless refers to biometric verification – iris scans, fingerprints and facial recognition – so travelers don't need to present boarding passes or passports at multiple checkpoints.

The call for innovation has only grown louder during the pandemic. For many airlines, airports and governments alike, biometrics offer an obvious mechanism to improve the travel experience and enhance security at the same time.

"The aviation sector has embraced the use of biometrics to make travel safer, offer a better experience, reduce friction points in the traveler journey, and cut costs," says Helena Bononi, Commercial Vice President at the WTCC. "Significant technological advances in digital identities continue to enter the marketplace and can help overcome the COVID-19 crisis."

Of course, it's also about allocating security resources more effectively. Pre-pandemic, many immigration systems – such as Global Entry in the US, EasyPass in Germany, and SmartGates in Australia – had already implemented biometrics to "leverage risk-based segmentation", enabling immigration to focus their energy on higher-risk travelers, adds Bononi.



Taking it a step further, Dubai International Airport recently rolled out a contactless 'smart tunnel' system that uses a mix of facial and iris recognition technology. Essentially, registered passengers can check-in, complete immigration and board their flights with a stroll through the tunnel. If a traveler is low-risk, they'll get the green light to continue on their journey.

While Singapore's Changi Airport had previously used fingerprints as the primary mode of identification at immigration clearance, new facilities unveiled in 2020 now use facial and iris recognition. The move is part of broader pandemic precautions to minimize surface contact, human-to-human interaction and improve safety throughout the airport.

And as more countries embrace "vaccine passports", Armand Arton, the founder and president of Arton Capital, believes the industry will adopt emerging technologies to further improve the border-crossing experience.

"The digitization trend is in motion and there's no going back now. Soon, you won't even need to take your passport out of your bag," says Arton. "In general, governments and immigration now require access to your health information, which was not required before COVID. It's comparable to what September 11 did in terms of security sharing, but with health information."

But as border technology becomes more advanced, how do travelers know that their personal information is being handled securely and responsibly? Bononi acknowledges that governments will need to create international agreements on how data is authenticated, verified and stored at both ends of a journey. "Collaboration between the public and private sector will be critical to driving innovation and adoption," she adds.

To this end, the International Civil Aviation Organization released the first Digital Travel Credential (DTC) standard in November 2020 – bringing digital identity credentials a step closer to reality. "This presents an opportunity to accelerate digital travel identity using a global standard," says Bononi.

Restoring international mobility to pre-pandemic levels will be crucial to global economic recovery, and seamless travel is undoubtedly an important part of the puzzle. Just remember to smile for the camera.

The Most Powerful Passports 2021 Q1



The Least Powerful Passports 2021 Q1



Still on Hold?

As humanity waited for global mobility to take flight once 2020 came to a close, we instead found ourselves at the other end of the line, in 2021, still waiting on hold.

Europe continues to reign at the top of the world's most powerful passports, though there has been an interesting shift in ranking.

At the end of 2019, Germany did not even appear in the top 10, but now leads the ranks at 135 MS with the most visa-free mobility than any other country in the world.

Other newcomers to the top 10 rank are Italy and Denmark, while we see the United Kingdom disappear; pushed down from 7th place to 20th. One can only assume that this can be related to the appearance of a variant strain in the UK.

World Openness Score is the key measure to depict whether governments are willing to reopen borders, and with a mere 1.7% increase in 4 months, it seems that the full-throttle confidence in reinstating open borders, has yet to be reached.

Whether this will allow the world to further implement safety and security protocols to make travel more seamless and responsible, or whether this means that travel will have to change altogether through vaccine passports and biometric scans, one thing is for certain.

While the world is on hold, global mobility is undergoing a thorough transformation.

The Most Powerful CBI Passports 2021 Q1

