

WPP



## UK maintains major leader status among global business leaders and citizens despite impact of Brexit, shows “Brand UK” survey from WPP

- *Global business leaders rank UK second best country in the world for second year*
- *Europeans rank UK entrepreneurship #4 but open for business falls to #27*
- *Britain’s business leaders are less likely to feel their country is moving in the right direction than their global counterparts*

London, UK – 15<sup>th</sup> March 2018 – As Britain continues to untangle itself from its 45-year-old membership of the European Community, a survey of more than 21,000 business leaders and citizens paints a mixed picture for the country’s influence on the world stage. The first **Brand UK** report from the long-running **Best Countries** series, unveiled at a reception at the Houses of Parliament today, ranked the UK as the #4 country in the world overall. It ranked #2 for having strong international alliances, a position it has held for the last two years. The UK was also ranked globally as #4 for being politically influential and entrepreneurial and #5 for being a powerful nation.

The **Brand UK** report is an extension of the **Best Countries** rankings, which are produced by WPP in collaboration with U.S. News & World Report and the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, USA. They rank 80 countries across a range of criteria, from economic influence and power to citizenship and quality of life, in order to capture how nations are perceived on a global scale.

The perception of “Brand UK” among major trade partners China, the European Union, India and the US is positive. Europeans ranked the UK #4 globally for its entrepreneurship, behind Switzerland, Germany and Sweden but #27 for being ‘open for business’, a drop of two places in the ranking. In addition, the EU countries ranked the UK #12 for being progressive, higher than the overall global rank of #15.

The US ranked the UK as the #4 country in the world for strong international alliances, while Germany took the top spot, highlighting the positive impact that the country’s leadership role in the European Union has on its global influence.

While 51% of UK respondents believed the country is moving in the right direction, that percentage is lower than the global average, which is 54%. More than half (56%) of British business leaders said the UK is moving in the right direction, but this is also lower than the global average of business leaders (59%).

Two thirds (69%) of British business leaders said they have benefited from membership of the European Union and other global trade organisations (higher than the 62% global average), yet more than half (52%) said they felt more like a citizen of their own country than the world (compared to the global average of 40%).

“The findings of the UK Best Countries report paint a mixed picture for ‘Brand UK’, which remains relevant and well-regarded, but has also clearly felt the impact of Brexit. Although Britain has a strong image globally in several areas including entrepreneurship, cultural influence and power, it will need to be vigilant about its brand appeal on the world stage as Brexit further influences internal and external dynamics,” said David Roth, who heads the Best Countries reports for WPP.

Other key report highlights included:

- **Overall perceptions of the UK declined in three key indices** – open for business, open travel policies and as a place citizens would like to live – factors that contribute to the country’s drop from #3 to #4 in the general rankings.
- **Not as open for business** – the perception of the UK as open for business dropped to #20 globally (from #19 in 2017).
- **Providing easy access to capital** – the UK is ranked #3 globally but Europeans have downgraded their view of the UK on this measure to #4.
- **Falling quality of life** – Britain is #13 in the world in terms of quality of life, falling below Germany, Austria and Luxembourg.
- **Europeans vote UK down as best place to live** – the perception of the UK as “a place I would live” dropped down to #20 among Europeans in the last year, potentially indicating dissatisfaction with the UK’s exit from the EU and most likely related to the impact of “open travel policies” which also dropped to #24.
- **More Brits disapprove of President Trump** – 67% of British citizens and business leaders disapprove of Trump compared to a global average of 58%.

“U.S. News is known globally for playing a key role in evaluating education and health institutions for the benefit of consumers for more than 30 years,” said Brian Kelly, editor and chief content officer at U.S. News. “We bring this same data-driven journalism into the public sector by collaborating with leaders in advertising and academia to produce the Best Countries Report, which uniquely measures a nation’s performance at multiple levels.”

Ends.

### **Notes to editors:**

The Best Countries ranking [methodology](#) utilizes data gathered from a proprietary survey fielded in July–September 2017 of more than 21,000 business leaders, other influencers and general citizens by the BAV Group, a global consultancy that is part of WPP, the world leader in advertising and marketing services. The report and rankings are based on how global perceptions define countries in terms of several qualitative characteristics, impressions that have the potential to drive trade, travel and investment and directly affect national economies. The study and model used to score and rank countries were developed by BAV Group and The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania.

The global [2018 Best Countries report](#) was released in January with Switzerland holding its position as the #1 country in the world. This year's survey included for the first time opinions of major world and business leaders.

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