



16 Hardest Countries to Get Citizenship by Naturalization

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In this article, we will take a look at **16 Hardest Countries to Get Citizenship by Naturalization**. You can skip our detailed analysis and go directly to the **5 Hardest Countries to Get Citizenship by Naturalization**.

The increase in easy access to international mobility has fostered the desire for acquiring citizenship of other countries. In addition, the overall greater acceptance of dual citizenship by countries has also propelled people to covet and scramble to obtain the advantages of dual nationalities. While all this holds true, there are certain caveats to gaining citizenship that must be kept in mind before making a leap. Citizenship through naturalization— one of the many ways of acquiring citizenship— can become a daunting and challenging task for some due to stringent rules and regulations of some countries, as well as poor integration of immigrants leading to slower access to nationality, making them the hardest countries to gain citizenship by naturalization.

Naturalization: An Overview

The process for naturalization varies across countries, with some making it reasonably easy and others making it downright impossible. For instance, certain Gulf countries make the **citizenship by naturalization process so arduous** that it becomes nearly impossible to attain. Qatar, for example, not only requires an exceptionally long continuous duration of residency (25 years) but also demands proficiency in Arabic, impeccable behavior, and substantial proof of financial means to support oneself, as well as renunciation of previous citizenship. Saudi Arabia is another country with similar prerequisites, albeit with a shorter duration requirement of 10 years. Some Asian countries like Japan and China also impose complicated rules surrounding naturalization, often discouraging potential applicants. Likewise, North Korea is yet another country where obtaining citizenship is nearly unattainable.

While Europe, in general, has been associated with slightly better ease regarding citizenship, even here, some countries make the process difficult. The variation among countries regarding naturalization rules, integration, and immigration policies has a far-reaching impact on naturalization rates. This is evident in the **2022 naturalization rates** for Europe, where the lowest rates were recorded in Latvia (0.4), Estonia (0.4), Austria (0.7), Bulgaria (0.7), Malta (0.8), and Czechia (0.8).

The US— the country which attracts the largest inflow of immigrants— has also, over the years, made the citizenship process somewhat stringent. Since 1970, naturalization rates in the country have fallen behind many others. Here, the application fee alone could handicap many potential applicants, having risen about **800% in real terms** since 1985. On top of this, there are other associated costs such as English classes and immigration lawyers. It is noted that the cost of obtaining citizenship in the US alone can hinder some **9.2 million immigrants** living in the country who are eligible for naturalization. According to the Pew Research Center, cost is the main reason why most Mexican immigrants have not been able to obtain US citizenship.

Positive Impact of Naturalization to Host Economy

Immigrants flowing into countries can have a substantially positive impact on the economy. With easier citizenship processes, these immigrants would be motivated to stay and continue their contributions to the country's growth. According to a CATO Institute report from 2023, immigrants in the US can not only prevent labor and population declines but also alleviate labor shortages, particularly with expected new **job openings reaching 1 million**. Their role in US entrepreneurship is also expected to counteract the decline seen in the US since the 1970s— immigrants are 80% more likely to start a new business compared to the US-born population. They have already founded 45% of the Fortune 500 companies and more than \$1 billion worth of businesses.

Some notable names in this category include Apple Inc (NASDAQ: **APPL**), whose founder was the son of a Syrian immigrant; Google (NASDAQ: **GOOG**), which was co-founded by a Russian immigrant; Amazon.com, Inc (NASDAQ: **AMZN**), founded by the son of a Cuban immigrant; and Costco, founded by the sons of Canadian immigrants. In this digital age, tech giants like Apple Inc (NASDAQ: APPL), Google (NASDAQ: GOOG), and Amazon.com, Inc (NASDAQ: AMZN) play significant roles in the US economy. Apple Inc's (NASDAQ: APPL) **\$430 billion investment** in the country in 2021 is a five-year project aimed at generating job-related growth for the economy. Amazon.com, Inc (NASDAQ: AMZN), on the other hand, leads approximately **37.8% of all online** retail sales in the US. Google's (NASDAQ: GOOG) 2022 Economic Report revealed that the company added **\$700 billion** in economic activity for millions of American businesses.

Methodology

To determine the 16 Hardest Countries to Get Citizenship by Naturalization, we relied on our previous article's methodology, **18 Hardest Countries to Get Citizenship in 2023**, and selected the worst countries for access to nationality. We then used the number of years for residency requirements for naturalization from various sources and ranked the countries accordingly. One distinction we made from our previous article was to exclude countries that strictly prohibit dual citizenship. This allowed us to assess the hardest countries for naturalization based solely on the number of years required.

By the way, Insider Monkey is an investing website that uses a consensus approach to identify the best stock picks of more than 900 hedge funds investing in US stocks. The website tracks the movement of corporate insiders and hedge funds. Our top 10 consensus stock picks of hedge

funds outperformed the S&P 500 stock index by more than 140 percentage points over the last 10 years ([see the details here](#)). So, if you are looking for the best stock picks to buy, you can benefit from the wisdom of hedge funds and corporate insiders.

Let us now take a look at our list for 16 Hardest Countries to Get Citizenship by Naturalization.

16. Serbia

Residency Requirement for naturalization: 3 years

The country has been placed in the slightly unfavorable category regarding access to nationality. With issues in immigrant integration and obstacles to naturalization, it is one of the hardest countries to obtain citizenship through naturalization. However, the number of years required for residency is lower than in some other countries.

15. Chile

Residency Requirement for naturalization: 5 years

While Chile has accepted the concept of dual citizenship, the naturalization process in the country is still not highly favorable, making it difficult to obtain citizenship through naturalization. Although there is no test, the interview might include an assessment of proficiency in Spanish and knowledge of Chilean culture, traditions, values, and history. Additionally, applicants are required to reside in the country for 5 years before becoming eligible for citizenship.

14. Turkey

Residency Requirement for naturalization: 5 years

Since 2017, Turkey has allowed dual citizenship and it can be gained after continuous stay of 5 years. However, the **naturalization process** requires proof of integration into the society with means to language, economic, and other requirements. For example, applicants should have command over the national language, have enough money to support themselves, and have no disease that could become public safety risk.

13. Russia

Residency Requirement for naturalization: 5 years

The difficulties encountered in acquiring Russian **citizenship through the naturalization process** entail at least a 5-year stay in the country, a clean criminal record, fluency in the Russian language, a comprehensive understanding of Russian history, culture, and the constitution, as well as financial stability indicating the ability to support oneself.

12. Mexico

Residency Requirement for naturalization: 5 years

Mexico has been placed in the slightly unfavorable category for obtaining nationality, mainly due to its **complicated naturalization process** based on integration into the country and language requirements. The country requires fulfilling the requirement of at least five years of legal residency, proving ties to the country, and passing a history, culture, and language exam.

11. Bulgaria

Residency Requirement for naturalization: 5 years

Bulgaria is also one of the countries with heavy restrictions on access to **nationality due to its strict eligibility criteria**. It requires the applicant to hold long-term permanent residence for five years, have a clean criminal record (no conviction of a premeditated crime), support themselves through income, and pass a Bulgarian language exam. Additionally, Bulgaria has restrictive policies regarding dual citizenship. While non-native Bulgarians are generally not allowed dual citizenship, certain exceptions exist. For example, spouses of Bulgarian citizens, citizens from EU member states, and citizens of countries with which Bulgaria has a reciprocal treaty.

10. Cyprus

Residency Requirement for naturalization: 7 years

Not only is Cyprus's access to nationality difficult, but the residency time required for attaining it is also on the high side. Even when immigrants become eligible for citizenship after a long period of seven years, the process is costly and complex, making it one of the hardest countries to obtain citizenship through naturalization.

9. Germany

Residency Requirement for naturalization: 8 years

The road to German **citizenship through naturalization** is quite demanding. Applicants must live in the country for at least 8 years, declare allegiance to the German constitution, demonstrate sufficient command of the German language, have no criminal record, and possess funds or income to support themselves. Thus, Germany becomes one of the hardest countries to obtain citizenship through naturalization. While the country allows dual nationality, prior permission from the government is required.

8. Romania

Residency Requirement for naturalization: 8 years

Romania is considered to have one of the vaguest citizenship requirements, and therefore, is included in the list of the hardest countries to obtain **citizenship through naturalization**. The required legal residency time amounts to 8 years, which, however, reduces to 5 years if married to a Romanian national. Applicants should also demonstrate, through their behavior, actions, and attitudes, that they are loyal to the country. Additionally, they should have the means to support themselves, no prior convictions, and knowledge of the Romanian language, culture, and civilization to facilitate their integration into society.

7. Hungary

Residency Requirement for naturalization: 8 years

Hungary is among the countries with one of the hardest and most restrictive citizenship policies. Not only is the applicant required to reside in the country for at least 8 years, but they must also have a clean criminal record, a stable source of income, good character, and pass a test in constitutional studies.

6. Denmark

Residency Requirement for naturalization: 9 years

The complicated and lengthy procedure for obtaining Danish citizenship through naturalization places this country among the hardest for gaining citizenship through this process. Among various requirements, uninterrupted residency for at least 9 years, declaration of allegiance and loyalty, financial support, proficiency in the Danish language, and passing a citizenship test are required.

5. Italy

Residency Requirement for naturalization: 10 years

For non-EU citizens, the naturalization process in Italy is quite lengthy, making it one of the most challenging for naturalization. At least 10 years of residency is mandatory for them. However, for EU citizens, this requirement drops substantially to four years. In addition, proof of sufficient income, knowledge of the Italian language, and a clean criminal record are also other requirements that must be met.

4. Greece

Residency Requirement for naturalization: 10 years

For immigrants hoping to settle down in Greece, the naturalization process is a significant consideration. The country requires applicants to reside for at least 10 years before they can be granted citizenship. Furthermore, demonstrating proper integration into society is essential. This includes showing proficiency in the Greek language, as well as knowledge of Greek culture and history. A clean criminal record and other requirements mentioned in Greek citizenship laws must also be fulfilled.

3. Spain

Residency Requirement for naturalization: 10 years

Spain's naturalization process for citizenship is among the most challenging. The residency requirement for naturalization spans at least 10 years, and in most cases, even longer. Like other countries with lengthy and convoluted processes, Spain also imposes certain criteria. A clean criminal record is necessary, and integration into Spanish society must be established. This requires passing language as well as civic tests. Furthermore, while the country does recognize dual citizenship, it is only for specific Latin American countries.

2. Slovenia

Residency Requirement for naturalization: 10 years

Slovenia also requires a 10-year stay in the country to qualify for citizenship, with the last five years being consecutive. Additionally, the applicant must prove they have sufficient financial means to support themselves, have no criminal record, provide proof of paid taxes, demonstrate that their citizenship does not harm the public, and take an oath to respect the Slovenian constitution. While dual citizenship is recognized, similar to Spain, it is only in select cases. Thus, Slovenia is also one of the hardest countries to get citizenship through naturalization.

1. Switzerland

Residency Requirement for naturalization: 10 years

One of the more complicated paths to naturalization compared to average Western European countries, Switzerland ranks among the top of our list for the hardest countries to obtain citizenship through naturalization. The applicant must reside in the country for at least 10 years and demonstrate full integration into Swiss society. This entails respecting the Swiss constitution, laws, and order, as well as demonstrating full proficiency in one of the Swiss official languages. Additionally, they should participate in the economic life of the country.