

Is the grass greener on the other side?

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A file image of a suitcase. Credit: pixabay.com/[stevepb \(http://pixabay.com/en/suitcase-luggage-baggage-bag-case-468445/\)](http://pixabay.com/en/suitcase-luggage-baggage-bag-case-468445/)

For South Africans, emigration is a sensitive topic and not an easy decision to make. And while many South Africans who emigrated have since returned to South Africa, there are still a number of South African citizens who are looking to other countries for work, schooling and lifestyle opportunities. This is according to James Bowling, CEO of Monarch & Co, a company that specialises in residency and citizenship by investment programmes around the world.

He points to a recent survey conducted by Canada Abroad Canadian Immigration Consulting where South Africans who were considering emigrating were asked their reasons. Most of the respondents (75%) were considering emigration due to the high levels of crime, while 69% wanted to give their children a better life and 40% were looking to earn a better income, with the balance of respondents citing a variety of reasons such as to earn a different currency, to experience something new or to be with their spouse or family.

Aside from crime, political uncertainty, economic instability and electricity problems all play a role in people's decisions to look elsewhere for better opportunities.

"The reasons for many South Africans wanting to leave have intensified in the last six months, and we have seen an uptick in people looking at residency or citizenship options in other countries since the beginning of this year," says Bowling.

However, he notes that emigration is a long term consideration and something that people need to be very sure of.

"There are a number of factors to take into account when emigrating – it's not just about where you would like to live," says Bowling.

There are tax considerations and financial implications in terms of getting money out of the country with the exchange control regulations, for example. Bowling also points out that the decisions around where to go will depend on a number of factors and what the most important ones are.

"Those looking to emigrate need to ask themselves why they are moving and what they are looking for in their new location. Do they want better schooling for their children, or are they looking for better work opportunities? The answer to these questions will help to determine which the best places to look at are."

A few other major considerations that Bowling believes those looking to emigrate need to take into account include:

Support systems: friends, family and yes, your much-relied on domestic workers will no longer be just around the corner. When considering emigrating, consider too that you will probably need to do your own housework, and won't have the in-person support from your friends and family back home.

Language and culture: Will you understand the language where you are planning on moving to? Language barriers can make a move and settling in to a new place that much harder as will vastly different cultures and cuisines.


Weather and lifestyle: South Africans are used to a moderate climate and can battle with vastly different weather somewhere else. In addition, most recreational activities, which add to the lifestyle appeal of any place, are mostly based on the weather.

Finances: How much will it really cost? Whether you are able to start working straight away or will need a slush fund to tide you over until you find employment, working out a budget of just how much relocating to another country will cost you is important. Another aspect to consider is if there will be any long term financial gain from emigrating.

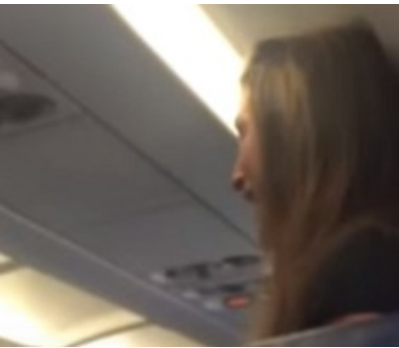
Exit strategy: What happens if you hate life in a different place and want to come back to South Africa? Bowling says that those looking to emigrate should leave their options open until they settle in, just to be sure they are happy and have a way out if they are not.

Overall, potential emigrants need to determine to the best of their ability whether or not they will be better off moving for all the reasons that they want to move for (lifestyle, financial, safety and security etc).

Bowling points out that as emigration can be an overwhelming and incredibly difficult decision to make, many South Africans are choosing a phased approach and are looking at alternative residency and citizenship options purely as investment and a rand hedge for the moment, with the view to possibly looking at emigrating at some point in the future. He recommends that anyone looking to emigrate or invest in a residency or citizenship programme should contact a professional to assist them in the process.

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