

# 2021: A lesson in expecting the unexpected

From extreme weather to unexpected flight and rail disruptions, 2021 was a lesson to all to have a plan, be prepared and expect the unexpected. Together FCM and our risk management partners helped travellers, travel arrangers and travel managers confront a wide range of unique travel disruptions.

As predicted in 2020, companies with employees on the road faced new and familiar hurdles posed by testing, vaccine and entry/exit requirements. In total, FCM delivered over 5,800 entry/exit alerts to customers looking to restart their travel programmes. But that's only a third of the 17,000 travel alerts sent to each programme via email, SMS, FCM Mobile and FCM Hub, in partnership with Crisis24.

Here's just one of the many examples of how these alerts proved vital. The turbulent opening of the Trans-Tasman travel bubble between Australia and New Zealand, where authorities grappled to keep their two-way travel lane open between April and July. With FCM's alerts, travel managers could proactively monitor, assess and respond to new developments and make critical decisions to mitigate risks facing their travellers.

Aside from attempts by governments to re-open safe travel corridors, travel and risk managers had to overcome obstacles such as COVID-19's variants of concern and its associating risk factors. Some, for example, had to cope with air travel disruption. Commercial airlines struggled to maintain flight operations while bringing back furloughed workers and re-incorporating grounded aircraft back into rotation, all while enforcing COVID-19-related rules and mandates. It meant travellers were often faced with long delays, cancellations and flight disruptions.

While some companies placed restrictions on international travel, others had to cope with domestic challenges that put strains on local accommodation and transportation. For example, social unrest was a common theme globally in 2021. Environmental, political and anti-COVID lockdown protests took place in major cities throughout the world from Melbourne to Paris, and Glasgow to Washington D.C.

## Travel risk strategy moves up a notch

With a myriad of challenges facing travel managers, the travel risk management community welcomed the new ISO 31030 standard with open arms. Formally published in September 2021, ISO 31030 is a new international standard providing organisations with a common approach on how to manage risks facing travelling workers. In particular, the standard offers a structured approach to the development, implementation, evaluation and review of everything in travel risk management from policy to programme development and mitigation strategies.

For many organisations, having a travel risk management strategy helped when confronting the unexpected in 2021. Transportation incidents and accidents were rare but not absent. In Taiwan, for example, a Taroko Express operating from Shulin to Taitung derailed as it was entering a tunnel. The eight-carriage train, carrying 494 passengers and 4 staff members at the time, collided with a truck shortly before entering the tunnel. It was the deadliest rail accident in Taiwan since 1948.

In the United States, travellers were also not immune from risks as seen in an air incident in February. A United Airlines flight, scheduled to depart from Denver to Honolulu, suffered an uncontained engine failure four minutes after takeoff. The aircraft safely returned to the airport but the incident resulted in Boeing and other civil aviation authorities around the world recommending to temporarily ground B777 aircraft with Pratt & Whitney PW4000-112 series engines.

## Looking into 2022

With 2021 now in the rearview mirror, travel programmes of all shapes and sizes are looking ahead to 2022 and beyond. New challenges and opportunities arise in a world driven by ever-changing travel risks.

Expect similar challenges impacting travellers' journeys, in addition to disruptions posed by inclement weather and operational difficulties. Many companies will place emphasis on traveller tracking and communication as a key part of travel risk.

One thing is for certain: businesses are looking to hit the road again. And digital strategies will be a vital component for travel managers looking to build or strengthen their travel risk management strategy. Digital transformation was a driving force in 2021 and will continue to be a benefit for businesses in 2022.

Risk management companies are focused on tracking major global events such as the 2022 Beijing Olympics, FIFA World Cup in Qatar and Commonwealth Games in Birmingham. Look to your TMC to play a pivotal role in helping you locate, communicate, and facilitate critical information and transportation needs to travellers, arrangers, and managers alike.

With 'expect the unexpected' in mind, FCM has invested in tools to help companies of all verticals manage their return-to-travel strategies. From the acquisition of Whereto and Shep, to a partnership with Sherpa, we're helping keep travellers up-to-date on changing travel restrictions.

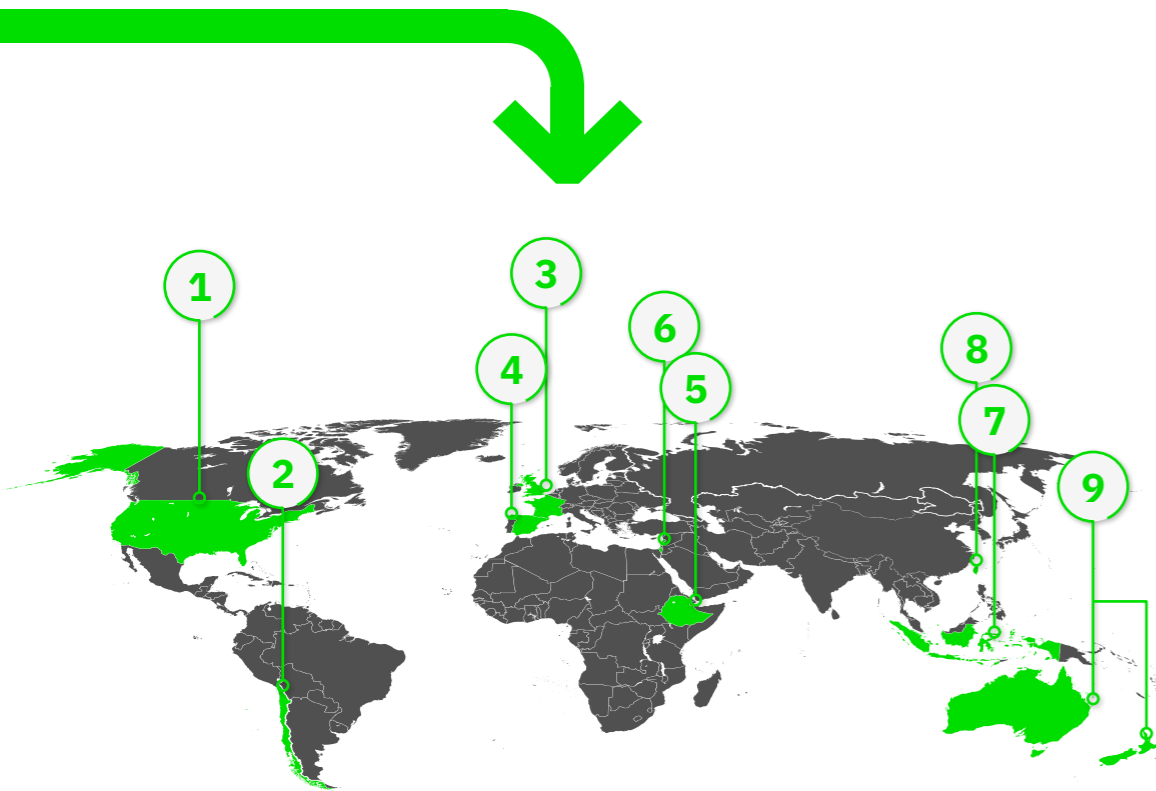
What other types of travel disruption can we expect in 2022? Look to threats posed by cyber-threat actors as travellers take to the road, more connected now than ever before. For others, political, economic and other transportation challenges will pose a substantial risk to travellers in the next 12-months and beyond.

What can organisations do to prepare for the road ahead? Travel managers can turn to their TMC to showcase their true value with the help of their people, products and partnerships. From dedicated 24/7 travel support to tools to help facilitate rapid and critical communications, and crucial third party relationships with both air, rail and hotel providers and security, health and assistance professionals.

Is keeping your travellers  
safe your top priority?  
Ours too.  
Let's talk >



# 2021 A Global Year In Review



**1. UNITED STATES**

**2. CHILE**

**3. UNITED KINGDOM & FRANCE**

**4. SPAIN**

**5. ETHIOPIA**

**6. ISRAEL**

**7. INDONESIA**

**8. TAIWAN, CHINA**

**9. AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND**

## **1: UNITED STATES**

In September 2021, an Amtrak train carrying 141 passengers and 17 crew members derailed near Joplin, Montana. It triggered FCM's Crisis Communications Protocol, an automated process designed to help travel managers become immediately aware of critical incidents impacting their travel programmes.

Other threats include a turbulent presidential transition that culminated into a riot at the Capitol in Washington DC. In 2022, the US will continue to face political challenges with mid-term elections set for November, as well as environmental challenges as the country tackles increasingly stronger hurricanes, tornadoes, and other severe weather. Companies should prepare for flight disruptions as airlines face a growing number of operational challenges.

## **4: SPAIN**

In September 2021 memories of the Eyjafjallajökull eruption confronted Europe as Spain began tracking the eruption of Cumbre Vieja in La Palma. With all said and done, the eruption forced the evacuation of over 7,000 people. At 85 days, it is known as the longest known eruption in the La Palma region.

The eruption was a reminder of the impact natural disasters can have on travel as La Palma Airport suspended flights and Eurocontrol activated its volcanic ash protocols.

## **7: INDONESIA**

In January 2021, Sriwijaya Air (SJ) Flight 182, a Boeing 737-500, crashed into the Java Sea near Jakarta. The flight, carrying 50 passengers and 12 crew, was just one of 15 fatal accidents observed in 2021. A significant decrease from the prior year as air traffic remained muted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2022, airline safety will remain a challenge in Southeast Asia as airlines bring back pilots from furlough and aircraft from temporary storage.

## **2: CHILE**

In 2019 and 2020, Chile experienced a wave of civil unrest, often disrupting air travel out of hubs like Santiago International Airport. With the country growing increasingly impatient and the government failing to showcase confidence, Chile took a big step in 2021 by electing its youngest-ever president in Gabriel Boric.

Historically, Chile has been at the epicentre of social, political, and economic change in South America. Look to the country in 2022 as their newly elected president takes office in March.

## **5: ETHIOPIA**

Addis Ababa, a transit and destination hub for many airlines globally, became the focal point of attention in 2021 as Ethiopia declared a State of Emergency. The escalation came at a time when a year-long civil war was on the verge of spilling onto the streets of Addis Ababa, leading many countries like the United States and United Kingdom to raise travel advisories and urge citizens and personnel to travel home immediately.

While flights continue to operate throughout the region, organisations should continue to monitor the conflict and its impact on travel through 2022.

## **8: TAIWAN, CHINA**

In April 2021, a Taroko Express operating from Shulin to Taitung derailed as it was entering a tunnel between Heren and Chongde. The eight carriage train, carrying 494 passengers and 4 staff members, collided with a truck shortly before entering the tunnel. It is the deadliest rail accident in Taiwan since 1948. Just one of the many incidents tracked by FCM's Crisis Management Team in 2021.

The accident acts as a reminder that heading into 2022, even for countries where international travel remains at lower-than-normal volumes, that unexpected incidents can occur.

## **3: UNITED KINGDOM & FRANCE**

In May 2021 the UK Civil Aviation Authority ordered all flights to avoid Belarusian airspace after a Ryanair flight was diverted to Minsk to detain an opposition journalist. The suspension was followed by French carriers and others in the EU, as countries condemned the action and sought to put in counter-measures to protect their citizens.

The UK and France have faced other threats including the UK's decision to raise its National Threat Level in November following a string of serious violent extremist attacks. Both countries suffered from severe flight and rail disruptions in the wake of operational challenges driven by the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **6: ISRAEL**

In May, following an outbreak of violence on the Israeli-Palestinian border, authorities in Israel announced that they would be temporarily halting all commercial air traffic at Ben Gurion Airport (TLV) in Tel Aviv. The conflict was a reminder that airports in conflict-prone regions are particularly susceptible to disruptions. In 2020 for example, airlines had to re-route flights around the Persian-Gulf in the wake of a conflict between US forces in Iraq and Iran.

In 2022, organisations operating in the region should continue to monitor for unexpected flare-ups and regional conflict.

## **9: AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND**

In March 2021, New Zealand experienced a series of earthquakes measuring as high as 8.1 on the Richter scale, capping off a year that witnessed the most 8.0+ seismic activity globally since 2007. While no significant damage was reported, Kiwis located in the North Island were still notified to evacuate to higher ground in the wake of a tsunami warning, as a precaution.

Fast forward to September 2021, Australia was also struck by a 5.9 magnitude earthquake that left residents startled in the middle of the night and businesses and homes with minor structural damage. The quake was reportedly the largest to hit Victoria in 50 years. In addition to naturally occurring phenomena, Australia also confronted a number of civil unrest events, from COVID-19 lockdown protests to climate change rallies leading up to COP26.

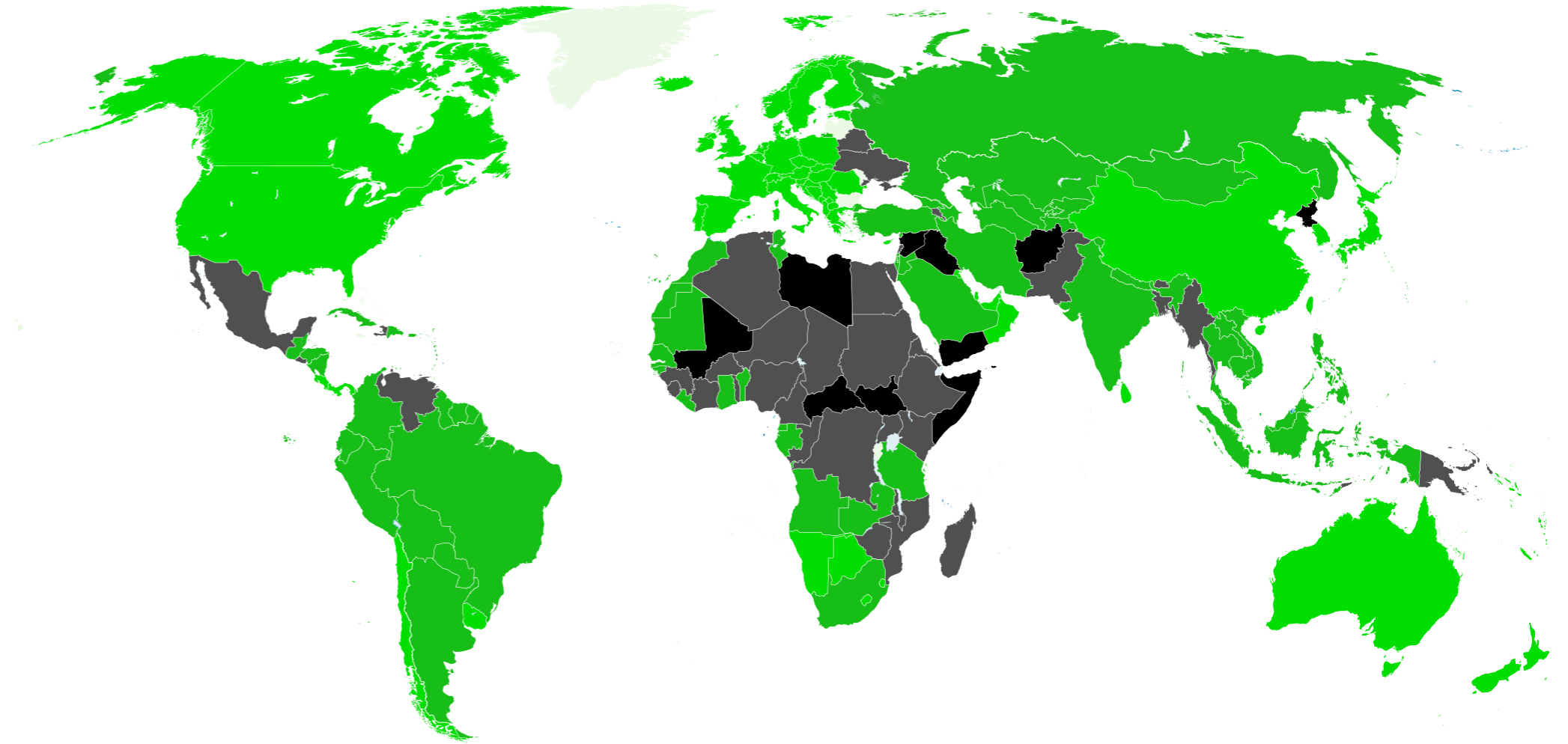
In 2022, look to Australia and New Zealand as they plot their individual paths towards re-opening their borders.

# FCM's Global TRAVEL RISK Map 2022

## ABOUT OUR RISK MAP:

FCM's 2022 Global Risk Map ratings are a compilation of several travel risk management sources. The information in this report does not and is not intended to constitute advice. Instead, all information, content and ratings on this update are for general informational purposes only.

[Learn more about our Travel Risk Management Tool here.](#)



## Top 5: Future country risk trends

- Belarus - Sanctions, transportation.**
- Ethiopia - War, civil unrest.**
- China - Lockdowns, national security legislation.**
- Mexico - Crime, economic strife.**
- United States - Severe weather, mid-term elections.**

## Top 5: Future stability risk trends

- Fragmentation - Vaccine inequality, health passports.**
- Environment - Severe weather, other natural hazards.**
- Entry/Exit - Travel bubbles, border restrictions.**
- Cyber - Cyber-ransom, cybercrimes, data protection.**
- Transportation - Personnel shortages, operational risks.**

## Security risk level

- MINIMAL** **Minimal Risk:** Most territories in this category will have a stable health and political infrastructure as well as low overall crime rates nationwide.
- LOW** **Low Risk:** Most areas in this category will have a stable health and political system with some unemployment and low crime rates.
- MEDIUM** **Medium Risk:** Most countries in this category will have a somewhat stable health and political infrastructure with moderate levels of crime.
- HIGH** **High Risk:** Most countries in this category will have unstable health and political systems with high rates of unemployment and exposure to violent and petty crimes.
- CRITICAL** **Critical Risk:** Most areas in this category will lack adequate health and political systems and experience very high rates of violent and petty crime.