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Why a growing number of Indians are giving up citizenship

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Aug 16, 2023 02:11 PM IST



A record number of 225,620 Indian Citizens have renounced their citizenship and have taken up foreign citizenship in 2022.



According to the data released by the minister, a record number of 225,620 Indian Citizens have renounced their citizenship and have taken up foreign citizenship in 2022.

So why are more and more Indians giving up their citizenship? Does the data depict the correct picture? Is the situation alarming? Is dual citizenship the solution? This article will attempt to answer these questions.

Let's look at the numbers:

The following table shows the number of Indians giving up citizenship every year.

| YEAR | NO OF PEOPLE | | |
|---------|--------------|-----------|-------------|
| | OVERALL | PRE-COVID | COVID YEARS |
| 2011 | 1,22,819 | 1,22,819 | |
| 2012 | 1,20,923 | 1,20,923 | |
| 2013 | 1,31,405 | 1,31,405 | |
| 2014 | 1,29,328 | 1,29,328 | |
| 2015 | 1,31,489 | 1,31,489 | |
| 2016 | 1,41,603 | 1,41,603 | |
| 2017 | 1,33,049 | 1,33,049 | |
| 2018 | 1,34,561 | 1,34,561 | |
| 2019 | 1,44,017 | 1,44,017 | |
| 2020 | 85,256 | | 85,256 |
| 2021 | 1,63,370 | | 1,63,370 |
| 2022 | 2,25,620 | | 2,25,620 |
| AVERAGE | 1,38,620 | 1,32,133 | 1,58,082 |

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As you can see, the average number of Indians giving up citizenship for the last 12 years from 2011 to 2022 is 138,620, which seems to be in line with the range of 120,000 to 140,000 each year. Hence the Figure of 225,620 for 2022 is an exception. A possible reason for this could be clearing the backlogs during the Covid period. As we all know, the processing of visas and citizenship applications worldwide had slowed down considerably during the Covid. This is reflected in the exceptionally low number of 85,256 in 2019. In the following years, the backlogs started getting cleared, and that's one of the key reasons we saw a spike in the nos. 2021 and 2022.

However, if you look closely at the numbers, you will notice another trend.

The average during the pre-covid period (2011 to 2019) was 132,133, which jumped up to 158,802 during and post-Covid (2020-2022), representing a whopping increase of 20%. This clearly demonstrates that post Covid the number of Indians giving up Citizenship is clearly on the rise.

Pre-covid, the main factors driving immigration from India have been better economic prospects, education, quality of life etc. These objectives could be met even with Permanent Residency status in foreign countries without having to take up citizenship.

Read Here: [Over 87,000 Indians gave up their citizenship so far in 2023, says MEA](#)

However, post covid; global mobility also seems to be an essential factor driving people to take up foreign Citizenship, which will entitle them to a foreign Passport.

The Indian passport, as we know, is not very powerful. It provides Visa-free access to only about 57 countries and that to mostly Asian, African, and Caribbean countries. As against this, with a Passport from countries like the US, [Canada](#), the UK, and [Australia](#), you can travel Visa-free to over 150 countries. Since India does not allow dual citizenship, given an option, most Indians eligible for citizenship in these countries would prefer to give up Indian Citizenship to get these passports.

This has led to a debate among some sections of society about whether India should allow dual citizenship so that Indians taking up foreign citizenship are not forced to give up their Indian Citizenship.

Dual citizenship or multiple citizenship means that you are legally a citizen of more than one country at the same time. For instance, you could be a citizen of the UK as well as a citizen of US or Canada at the same time as these countries allow dual citizenship. The advantage of multiple citizenship is of course you get rights and benefits of all the countries where you are a citizen. Another advantage of multiple or dual citizenship is that you can hold more than one passport, and thereby you can travel visa-free to more countries which will give you greater mobility.

Now let us come to this very important question - can Indian citizens get a second passport or dual citizenship? The Indian constitution does not allow you to hold foreign citizenship while being an Indian citizen. So as soon as you acquire your foreign citizenship, you lose Indian citizenship by default. Further, it is also mandatory for you to surrender your passport after you have lost Indian citizenship; otherwise, there will be a penalty.

Read Here | [Over 232k Indians surrendered passports; most from Delhi: Centre](#)

However, India does offer the status of Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) to its people who have taken up Foreign Citizenship. This special status which is provided through the OCI card offers several benefits like a lifelong free travel visa to India, freedom to live, work, carry on business in India, owning assets/properties in India etc.

In short, OCI card holders can enjoy most of the benefits which India Citizens get, except for the right to an Indian Passport, the right to vote or hold public positions and restrictions on the purchase of agricultural land.

Another important factor to be considered is that these are not the number of people leaving the country now. Most countries like the US, Canada, UK, Australia etc., require you to first stay there with Permanent Residency status for a period of 5 to 6 years before you become eligible for Citizenship. Hence, most of the people who are taking up citizenship in those countries would have moved there at least 6 to 10 years back or even more.

It is also essential to keep in mind that the above numbers may not include a small number of Indians who have taken up foreign citizenship and have not yet formally renounced their Indian citizenship. However, as per the law, they have ceased to be Indian citizens.

Hence, in theory, it may seem allowing dual citizenship will encourage Indians to retain their Indian citizenship. However, in practice, apart from an emotional connect to India, it does not offer any substantial advantage. This is because the Indian passport provides limited global mobility, and the OCI status already provides you with most of the benefits overseas Indians would like to enjoy, as explained earlier.

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