# London retains dominance as global legal hub despite wealth exodus



Despite a significant exodus of wealthy individuals from the UK triggered by recent tax reforms, London remains the preeminent global centre for resolving complex legal disputes involving high-net-worth individuals (HNWIs). While tax considerations are driving many to relocate to more favourable jurisdictions such as Dubai, Milan, and Singapore, the city’s storied legal ecosystem continues to attract the ultra-wealthy when it comes to safeguarding their assets and resolving intricate disputes.

In 2024, the UK witnessed a 157 percent surge in millionaire departures compared to the previous year. Reports forecast that the nation will lose around 16,500 millionaires in 2025 alone—a figure more than double the outflow predicted for China—representing a net wealth migration on an unprecedented scale. This dramatic decline is underscored by data revealing a fall in the number of UK billionaires from 165 in 2024 to 156 in 2025, the sharpest since the Sunday Times Rich List began 37 years ago. Such trends have been linked to a series of tax changes culminating in the April 2025 abolition of the non-domiciled tax regime, which previously allowed UK residents claiming overseas residency to avoid UK tax on foreign income and capital gains. This reform, coupled with broader fiscal tightening measures introduced in the Autumn Budget of 2024, including hike in capital gains tax, freezes on income tax thresholds, and inheritance tax expansions, have combined to create a less hospitable environment for wealth retention in the UK.

Yet, this outward movement of wealth does not mirror a retreat from London’s courts and legal services, which remain a firm fixture in the lives of the world’s wealthy. The divergence between tax residency and choice of legal jurisdiction is well established. London continues to be the preferred forum for commercial legal arrangements and dispute resolution, underpinned by the city’s unrivalled legal infrastructure. London’s courts boast specialist judges with deep expertise in commercial, chancery, family, and trust law, whose fairness and adherence to the rule of law inspire global confidence. English common law, notable for its clarity and reliance on precedent, excels as a natural framework for cross-border contracts and disputes, which helps explain why the law of England governs many international agreements—covering private equity, joint ventures, trusts, and real estate—regardless of where the parties or assets are located.

This legal ecosystem extends far beyond the judiciary. London’s network of private client lawyers, tax advisers, forensic accountants, investigators, and wealth managers offers comprehensive support that is difficult to replicate elsewhere. This infrastructure is demonstrated by ongoing high-profile legal disputes involving globally dispersed assets and family estates, such as the litigation in London over the $3 billion estate of Russian billionaire Oleg Burlakov, and a recent High Court case concerning ownership of a historic £10 million diamond within a Qatari royal family. Indeed, a majority of cases heard by the English Commercial Court involve international parties or assets located outside the UK. The efficiency of London’s courts, specialist divisions for financial and technology cases, and enforceability of judgments globally—bolstered by the UK’s status as a party to the New York Convention on arbitration enforcement—further solidify London’s position as the venue of choice for high-stakes dispute resolution.

While the wealthy are relocating their tax residences and even shifting family office operations abroad in pursuit of more favourable fiscal regimes and business environments, they continue to maintain strong legal ties to London. This ongoing relationship is sustained by the complexity and longevity of litigation, which often stretches over years and means legal commitments made while residing in the UK remain binding long after individuals have left. Moreover, London’s status as a neutral, stable, and English-speaking environment is invaluable in disputes involving politically sensitive figures or transnational family and business interests. As a result, many wealthy families continue to establish trusts governed by English law and designate London courts as the arbitration forum for potential disputes.

In short, London is evolving from a city where wealth is primarily held to one where it is rigorously protected and enforced. This transition is evidenced by strategic moves within the financial sector, such as the decision by Swiss private bank EFG International to establish an Asia desk in London shortly after the non-dom tax changes took effect, signalling confidence in London’s continued centrality to wealth management and legal resolution.

For advisers, wealth managers, and family office professionals, this dynamic underscores an important point: relocation for tax purposes does not equate to a full exit from London’s legal domain. Instead, professionals should continue to leverage the strengths of London’s legal system when advising clients on asset protection, contract structuring, and litigation preparedness. The city’s courts remain the ultimate legal sanctuary for the world’s wealthiest, offering a level of judicial certainty and expertise unmatched by any alternative venue. As one might say in the spirit of the Eagles’ ‘Hotel California,’ the ultra-wealthy may check out for tax reasons, but when it comes to legal battles, London remains the place they inevitably return to.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.pwmnet.com/content/69195c1c-fc1d-49c5-bbb7-2bcb4aca548a), [[2]](https://www.henleyglobal.com/newsroom/press-releases/henley-private-wealth-migration-report-2025), [[3]](https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-has-fewer-billionaires-2025-sunday-times-rich-list-shows-2025-05-16/), [[4]](https://moneyweek.com/personal-finance/tax/tax-risks-of-relocating-from-uk), [[7]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/britain-lose-16500-millionaires-2025-b1234525.html)
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2. <https://www.henleyglobal.com/newsroom/press-releases/henley-private-wealth-migration-report-2025> - Henley & Partners' 2025 Private Wealth Migration Report forecasts a record 142,000 millionaires relocating internationally, with the UK expected to experience the largest net outflow of high-net-worth individuals (HNWIs) in a decade. The report highlights that the UK is projected to lose 16,500 millionaires in 2025, more than double the anticipated outflow from China. The UAE is projected to attract the highest number of relocating millionaires, with a net inflow of 9,800, followed by the US with 7,500. ([henleyglobal.com](https://www.henleyglobal.com/newsroom/press-releases/henley-private-wealth-migration-report-2025?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-has-fewer-billionaires-2025-sunday-times-rich-list-shows-2025-05-16/> - The Sunday Times Rich List 2025 reveals a significant decline in the number of UK billionaires, marking the largest drop since the list's inception in 1989. The number of billionaires fell from 165 in 2024 to 156 in 2025. This downturn is attributed to factors such as stock market volatility linked to U.S. trade tariffs under President Trump and UK tax policy changes, including the removal of the 'non-dom' tax exemption, which previously benefited wealthy foreigners. ([reuters.com](https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/uk-has-fewer-billionaires-2025-sunday-times-rich-list-shows-2025-05-16/?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://moneyweek.com/personal-finance/tax/tax-risks-of-relocating-from-uk> - Faced with a £40 billion tax increase introduced by Chancellor Rachel Reeves in the October Autumn Budget 2024, growing numbers of wealthy individuals in the UK are considering relocating abroad. Key measures include freezes on income tax thresholds, hikes in capital gains tax, employer National Insurance, and stamp duty, alongside the inclusion of pensions in inheritance taxes from 2027. Combined with persistent inflation and high interest rates, these fiscal pressures have sparked significant outbound interest among high net worth individuals (HNWIs), with over 70% planning to move within five years. ([moneyweek.com](https://moneyweek.com/personal-finance/tax/tax-risks-of-relocating-from-uk?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.ft.com/content/1e4e4fb6-a0ee-4764-9197-e982c4c212a4> - The UK is facing an accelerating brain drain among its wealthy non-domiciled residents due to recent tax policy changes, including the phasing out of the non-dom status and revisions to inheritance tax. Wealthy individuals and entrepreneurs are increasingly relocating to countries with more favorable tax environments such as Dubai and Italy. This trend is raising concerns among charities, the arts sector, and business leaders who fear the loss of significant investment, tax contributions, and philanthropy. ([ft.com](https://www.ft.com/content/1e4e4fb6-a0ee-4764-9197-e982c4c212a4?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.henleyglobal.com/newsroom/press-releases/uk-wealth-exodus> - Henley & Partners' press release titled 'WEXIT: Wealthy Brits Exit UK for EU Ahead of Budget' discusses the anticipated migration of high-net-worth individuals from the UK to the European Union. The report indicates that most of the approximately 9,500 HNWIs forecast to leave the UK in 2024 are expected to head to the EU, with Italy, Malta, Greece, Portugal, Switzerland, Monaco, Cyprus, France, Spain, and the Netherlands being popular destinations. ([henleyglobal.com](https://www.henleyglobal.com/newsroom/press-releases/uk-wealth-exodus?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/britain-lose-16500-millionaires-2025-b1234525.html> - An article from The Standard reports that Britain is on track to lose an unprecedented 16,500 millionaires in 2025 amid high taxes and a crackdown on the non-domiciled tax regime. The article highlights that these individuals would collectively hold £66 billion in investable assets such as stocks and real estate. The report attributes this outflow to factors including the end of the non-dom status and revisions to inheritance tax. ([standard.co.uk](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/britain-lose-16500-millionaires-2025-b1234525.html?utm_source=openai))