



WHITE PAPER

5 KEYS TO INTERNATIONAL BACKGROUND SCREENING: WHAT EMPLOYERS NEED TO KNOW



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Note: This article primarily applies to those ordering background checks from within the United States, although there is useful information about international screening for all.

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted traditional in-office work. The number of people primarily working from home tripled from 2019 to 2021, while allowing organizations to expand their recruitment efforts to a wider pool of applicants in the U.S. and abroad. In a world where candidates are increasingly mobile across borders, and to protect the integrity of your global organization, international background checks are a must have for all employers.

These top five insights will prepare you to implement international background screening successfully at your organization.

#1: International Screening is Unavoidable.

The world is multicultural. Some countries like the United States have higher levels of immigration, and some countries like Canada and Australia are very pro-immigration. In the U.S., the H1-B visa, which approves people from other countries to come to the U.S. to work, allows 85,000 individuals annually.

Some industries also rely heavily on immigrant labor, such as tech and healthcare, which can have heavy screening requirements. For example, many Filipino nurses come to the U.S. for work. This is because U.S. schools worked closely with schools in the Philippines to teach U.S.-style medicine, allowing Filipino immigrants to be better prepared with minimal training if they chose to come to the U.S. Due to this long and rich history, organizations in healthcare need background checks from the Philippines more frequently.

Organizations that choose to eliminate international screening add risk. Your organization created your current background screening program with thorough thought and evaluation based on the job responsibilities your employees have, the regulations that apply to your industry, and the populations of people your employees interact with. Disregarding searches that are legally allowable and available in other countries increases your risk.

Without a doubt, international screening is a necessary part of your background check program.

#2: There are a few common myths about international background screening.

CLAIM: IT'S MORE DIFFICULT TO SCREEN INTERNATIONALLY THAN IN YOUR HOME COUNTRY.

FALSE. Yes, it can be intimidating to screen internationally when you're not familiar with the laws of the land, or procedural and paperwork requirements. However, background screening providers like Cysive are well-versed in international screening and have all the support tools you need to complete your background checks. Cysive has a rich history in international screening, as well as international offices.

It gets easier all the time as there are more resources (such as a richer network of international screening providers to make use of), more sources for information, and more familiarity with the process.

CLAIM: BACKGROUND CHECKS ARE ILLEGAL IN SOME COUNTRIES.

FALSE. Some type of screening is allowed in every country. Background screening does not only consist of criminal record checks. Verifications, such as education and employment verifications, are allowable in all countries, whether conducted by the employer directly or a third-party provider.

There are, of course, varying restrictions in different countries. Some may not allow criminal checks or credit checks. Restrictions may also vary by job position, location of the candidate, or the location of the requestor. In Poland, for example, criminal checks are only allowed in specific instances, such as a candidate working with vulnerable populations or in regulated financial positions. But they apply specifically for people working or living in Poland. If the candidate and employer are outside of Poland, but previously lived in Poland, these restrictions may not apply.

How do you know what's allowed?

Seek legal advice on what background screens are allowed in various countries. Background screening providers like Cysive can provide some information, but we cannot provide legal advice.

And remember, there is a difference between what is available and what is allowable. Information may be available, but may not be allowable depending on the job position, privacy regulations, labor rules, etc., just like the laws vary in your home country.

Get guidance from your legal team on what searches you can use in your specific situation.

CLAIM: A BACKGROUND CHECK HERE IS THE SAME AS A BACKGROUND CHECK THERE.

FALSE. Sources, products, and results vary by country, provider, and process. For example, an ID check could be a:

- Document validation
- Document validation with face liveness test
- Machine-Readable Zone (MRZ) check, which are the stripes on the passport identity page
- Country's ID issuing authority
- Country's immigration authority

When reviewing searches available from your background screening provider, ensure that you understand whether it's the same process and result that you're anticipating.

For example, a criminal local search abroad may be compatible with a U.S. county criminal search (address based) or a U.S. statewide search.

Criminal national searches abroad usually come from a government or judicial authority, and cover the entire country with a single search. These have no U.S. equivalent. "National" criminal searches in the U.S. may span the entire country (such as the FBI fingerprint database), but they will not have all the records from county, state, and federal in the results.

#3: You should compare your U.S. and non-U.S. screening.

The U.S. has a strong background screening culture, which can make it difficult to set expectations for global background screening. There are several differences in U.S. screening versus international screening:

1. **Information needed to search:** The U.S. frequently only requires minimal information to search. Non-U.S. countries typically need more information, copies of an ID, special forms, consents, etc.
2. **Turnaround time:** Turnaround time is low in the U.S. compared to non-U.S. searches. In the U.S., some searches are instant, the average turnaround time is less than two days, and local events have less impact. In non-U.S. countries, there are no instant searches. Turnaround times are higher, although service providers are constantly looking for ways to reduce time. Local events, like inclement weather, may have a greater impact on turnaround time.
3. **Sources:** The U.S. has an extensive screening support network and databases. Non-U.S. countries are growing screening support networks and there are few databases allowed or available.
4. **Fair Credit Reporting Act:** The FCRA applies in the U.S., but may not apply outside of the U.S.
5. **Motor Vehicle Reports & credit reports:** These reports provide a lot of detail in the U.S. In non-U.S. countries, MVRs rarely contain violation history, and credit reports rarely contain as much information as a typical U.S. report does.



The most common international search types are:

- Criminal History
- Adverse Media
- Global Sanctions
- Civil Search
- Bankruptcy
- Credit
- Directorship
- MVR/Driving History
- Financial Regulatory
- Address
- Identity
- Right to Work
- Verifications

Ordering requirements for many of these searches may vary from what you're used to in the U.S. For example:

- **Full Name:** Include middle names or multiple middle names, mother's name, father's name, or any other name you can provide.
- **Date of Birth:** Pay special attention to the format of the date of birth (MM/DD/YYYY vs DD/MM/YYYY) which is commonly used in other countries.
- **Addresses:** These should be as complete as possible. Addresses in other countries will look different than in the U.S. For example, in India, addresses are very complex and descriptive. Ensure you provide all of the information you have access to regarding an address.
- **ID Numbers:** Unlike the U.S., most countries have a national ID number and they are issued a national ID. Depending on the search, you may just need the ID number, or you may need to provide a copy of the ID. If a copy of the ID is not required, it's often best to only provide the ID number, as an ID will provide unnecessary additional information which may be a privacy concern.
- **Diplomas:** Many schools around the world will only provide a verification of education if a copy of the diploma is provided. A copy of the diploma is also useful because it provides what the candidate's name was when they attended school, and exactly which school an individual went to. For instance, a university may have many colleges underneath it, and the records may be kept under a specific college rather than at the university level.



- **Change is constant:** Be prepared for ordering requirements to change. Background screening requirements change just like laws and requirements change in the U.S. Your screening provider may not get much notice of a changing requirement, if any, but at Cisive, we do everything we can to provide you with as much warning as possible.

#4: You do not need expertise in 240 countries.

Most searches will come from a limited number of countries. More than 90% of your international background checks will likely come from 10 or fewer countries.

The most popular countries you search will vary by industry. For example, in healthcare, your most common country might be the Philippines. In financial services, it may be Hong Kong, Singapore, or the United Kingdom. In technology, the most common countries are often China, India, or Nepal.

Focus on understanding the requirements from your key countries and regions, and engage legal support as needed.

#5: International screening is not as scary as you think.

Your background screening provider is here to help you. Cisive can assist with training your staff, reviewing your ordering requirements, and answering any questions you might have about international screening.

Be prepared when approaching your background screening provider about international screening with:

- **Volume and volume spikes:** For example, you may be opening an office in another country and you'll have high volume while filling that office. Knowing about high volume can sometimes help to decrease pricing for you.
- **Your key countries and key search types** required.
- **Whether your candidates are in-country or out-of-country:** We may set up a workflow specifically for a particular country if you anticipate high volume.
- **How knowledgeable your staff is already:** This gives us an idea of how we can best support you.
- **Clear expectations** so we can make sure we're meeting your needs.

International screening may seem intimidating. Countries often have different document requirements, or the information they provide may be different than what you're used to. It's important to engage with a service provider familiar with the local environment and the relevant legal requirements and restrictions. **With the right approach, there is no reason why you cannot screen globally with similar standards as you apply to domestic candidates, and with the same level of efficiency.**

[Contact Cisive](#) to learn about our global background screening services for your organization.

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ABOUT CISIVE

At Cative, we are experts in the specific risks and regulations that apply to the financial services and other highly regulated industries including healthcare and transportation. For many years, we have provided tailored solutions to meet the unique requirements of our enterprise clients.

Cative's service model provides a single, integrated system throughout the globe using complete applicant information and country-specific forms. Cative returns information to our clients through a centralized system for analysis, quality control, presentation, and billing.

With over four decades of experience and expertise in working with many of the world's largest financial services institutions, Cative's deep insight into employment screening practices and industry knowhow, is unlike any other background screening provider in the industry.

Your business will not only get a background screening provider, but a lifelong partner – a company that stands by their work; protects their clients and provides the consultation and guidance world class act organizations are looking for.

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