

## British Locals Cannot Compete against the Irish Charm

Expats feel welcome in Ireland, but those living in the UK are increasingly given the cold shoulder.

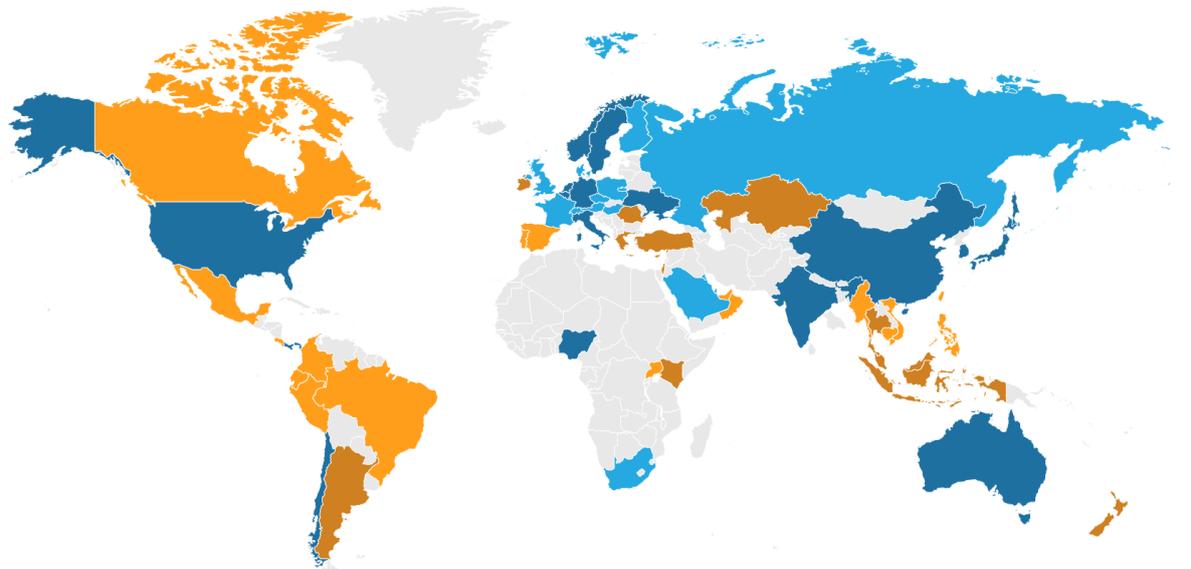
### Ireland

- Friendly attitude towards expats: 76%
- Ease of making local friends: 59%
- Expats likely to stay forever: 49%

### United Kingdom

- Friendly attitude towards expats: 50%
- Ease of making local friends: 38%
- Expats likely to stay forever: 28%

Munich, 21 March 2018 — When it comes to the local population's friendliness towards foreign residents, the United Kingdom has ranked far below Ireland since 2015: in 2017, there is even a difference of 26 places between the two destinations (with the UK ranking 56th vs. Ireland ranking 30th). As many as 26 percentage points separate the positive ratings for the UK (50%) and Ireland (76%) from each other, as the latest [Expat Insider survey](#) reveals. Based on the insights of close to 13,000 expats from 188 countries and territories in the annual survey, [InterNations](#), the world's largest network for people who live and work abroad, compiled [a so-far unpublished ranking of the world's friendliest countries for foreign residents](#). Chart-topper Portugal is followed by Taiwan, Mexico, Cambodia, Bahrain, Costa Rica, Oman, Colombia, Vietnam, and Canada.



1 Portugal	9 Vietnam	17 Spain	24 Israel	32 Greece	39 Luxembourg	47 Germany	54 Poland	62 Czech Republic
2 Taiwan	10 Canada	18 Myanmar	25 Malta	33 Nigeria	40 Singapore	48 Norway	55 France	63 Switzerland
3 Mexico	11 Philippines	26 Argentina	26 Argentina	34 India	41 Italy	49 Chile	56 United Kingdom	64 Austria
4 Cambodia	12 Peru	27 Kenya	27 Kenya	35 Netherlands	42 South Korea	50 Belgium	57 South Africa	65 Kuwait
5 Bahrain	13 Ecuador	28 Kazakhstan	28 Kazakhstan	36 USA	43 China	51 Sweden	58 Hungary	
6 Costa Rica	14 Brazil	29 Turkey	29 Turkey	37 Australia	44 Japan	52 Russia	59 Saudi Arabia	
7 Oman	15 UAE	30 Ireland	30 Ireland	38 Hong Kong	45 Ukraine	53 Qatar	60 Denmark	
8 Colombia	16 Uganda	23 Cyprus	31 New Zealand	46 Panama			61 Finland	

### Two Countries Drifting Apart

In 2014, Ireland (23rd) and the UK (19th) still ranked fairly close to each other in terms of friendliness towards foreign residents, but they have been drifting apart ever since. Expats find the British distant (42%) and reserved (58%), while only 11 and 26 percent, respectively, say the same about the Irish. An Italian expat values the "genuine friendliness" of the Irish, but a Portuguese national in the UK states that "recently, I get the sense that foreigners are not as welcome as I thought before the referendum".

### **(Missing) a Sense of Belonging**

When asked how they would describe their social circles, 22 percent of expats in Ireland say they are mainly friends with other expats, while another 37 percent, however, are mostly friends with local residents. A Swedish expat living in Ireland thinks they are *"sociable, friendly people who know how to have a laugh and enjoy themselves"*. In the UK, survey respondents paint quite a different picture: while more than three in ten expats are mainly friends with other expats (32%), only 20 percent state to be mainly friends with local residents. Maybe it is this sense of belonging to a circle of local friends that leads to seven in ten expats in Ireland feeling at home in the local culture (70%), while only 57 percent feel the same way about the UK.

## **Top 10 Most Welcoming Countries for Expats**

### **1. Portugal**

- Friendly attitude towards expats: 94%
- Ease of making local friends: 58%
- Expats likely to stay forever: 47%

Climbing nine places since 2016, Portugal claims the title of the most welcoming country for expats. *"The local population is friendly and helpful,"* states an Australian, while a Dutch expat values that *"people look after each other"* here. In fact, close to four in five expats (79%) describe the Portuguese as welcoming, and about three in ten (29%) state that locals make up most of their social circles (vs. 19% globally).

### **2. Taiwan**

- Friendly attitude towards expats: 86%
- Ease of making local friends: 61%
- Expats likely to stay forever: 30%

Close to three-quarters of expats living in Taiwan agree that the Taiwanese are welcoming (73%) rather than distant (8%). *"The people are wonderfully friendly and welcoming to foreigners,"* states a US American expat. Maybe it is this friendly attitude that makes it easy for the majority of expats to settle down in the country (74%) and feel at home in the local culture (69%).

### **3. Mexico**

- Friendly attitude towards expats: 87%
- Ease of making local friends: 73%
- Expats likely to stay forever: 39%

Considering how easy expats find it to make local friends in Mexico, it comes as no surprise that 30 percent say their friends are mainly locals. Moreover, four in five expats find it easy to settle down in the country (81%) and to get used to the local culture (80%). A US American expat especially likes *"how easy it is to adapt, and the people are incredibly friendly"*.

### **4. Cambodia**

- Friendly attitude towards expats: 92%
- Ease of making local friends: 59%
- Expats likely to stay forever: 23%

Moving to Cambodia does not seem to be worrisome for expats: more than four in five find the local population welcoming (85%) and think that it is easy to settle down here (83%). This might be one of the reasons why 39 percent felt at home nearly straight away, which is the highest share across all surveyed countries and more than twice the global average (19%).

## 5. Bahrain

- Friendly attitude towards expats: 86%
- Ease of making local friends: 55%
- Expats likely to stay forever: 11%

Close to seven in ten (69%) find the Bahrainis welcoming, and another 73 percent feel at home in the local culture. This might be thanks to the lack of a significant language barrier: 91 percent find it easy to live here without speaking the local language. *"Bahrain is a beautiful melting pot of many different cultures,"* states an expat from the USA. In fact, only one percent believes that they will never feel at home here.

## 6. Costa Rica

- Friendly attitude towards expats: 87%
- Ease of making local friends: 78%
- Expats likely to stay forever: 48%

Out of 65 countries, Costa Rica is the number one destination when it comes to making local friends. This might be due to the fact that 85 percent of expats describe Costa Ricans as welcoming rather than distant (9%), which is 30 percentage points above the global average (55%). Moreover, it might have contributed to more than four in five expats saying they feel at home in the local culture (81%), compared to a global average of 60 percent.

## 7. Oman

- Friendly attitude towards expats: 86%
- Ease of making local friends: 60%
- Expats likely to stay forever: 12%

*"Oman is very expat friendly. The locals are warm and welcoming,"* says an Indian living in Oman, and most expats in the country seem to agree: close to three-quarters describe the locals as welcoming (73%). Despite that positive attitude, only three percent state to be mainly friends with locals — however, the majority (58%) is part of a quite mixed social circle.

## 8. Colombia

- Friendly attitude towards expats: 87%
- Ease of making local friends: 62%
- Expats likely to stay forever: 33%

Out of the top 10 most welcoming countries, expats in Colombia are the most likely to be mainly friends with locals (34%). In fact, more than four in five expats describe the Colombians as welcoming (86%) and find it easy to settle down in the country (81%). A US American finds the Colombians *"open, warm, and friendly"*, and an expat from the Netherlands adds that they *"are always willing to help"*.

## 9. Vietnam

- Friendly attitude towards expats: 83%
- Ease of making local friends: 56%
- Expats likely to stay forever: 16%

More than four in five expats describe the Vietnamese as welcoming (81%), and 73 percent find it easy to settle down in the country. *"I love the friendly vibe in the city,"* states an expat from South Korea about life in Ho Chi Minh, *"people are mostly nice and gentle."* Despite that welcoming attitude, more than half the expats in Vietnam (51%) plan to stay up to five years at most, which is quite above the global average (35%).

## 10. Canada

- Friendly attitude towards expats: 81%
- Ease of making local friends: 43%
- Expats likely to stay forever: 45%

Canadians are perceived as welcoming by 62 percent of expats in the country, or as a French expat puts it: they are “*open-minded, tolerant, and benevolent*”. In fact, close to three in ten expats state to be mainly friends with locals (27%), which might contribute to their ease of settling down in the country (70%). Although many expats (45%) find it likely that they will stay forever, the share of expats not yet feeling at home in the country (15%) is the highest out of the top-10 destinations.

## Read More about Feeling Welcome Abroad



### The Top 10 Most Welcoming Countries

Portugal, Taiwan, and Mexico top the table when it comes to the friendliness of the local population towards foreign residents, but expats can expect a frosty welcome in Switzerland, Austria, and Kuwait, according to the respondents of the Expat Insider survey.



### The Expat Bubble

Expats often struggle to completely adjust to living in another country. But sticking exclusively with the expat community may ultimately prevent you from really understanding and immersing yourself in the local culture. InterNations helps you leave your comfort zone!



### Ten Ways to Make a Country Feel Like Home

Before a move abroad, excitement is usually high. You are probably imagining all the great things you will learn at your new job and how they will advance your career. You are probably already dreaming of all the delicious local foods you will get to try and the wonderful friends you are about to make, but then you arrive and feel out of place.



### Seven Reasons Why You Aren't Fitting in With the Locals

You took a huge step by moving to a new country! However, it doesn't quite feel like home yet without the right people by your side. Making new friends through cultural barriers can be a struggle, but thankfully there are ways to make it easier.

## About the InterNations Expat Insider 2017 Survey

For its annual [Expat Insider survey](#), InterNations asked about 13,000 expatriates representing 166 nationalities and living in 188 countries or territories to provide information on various aspects of expat life, as well as their gender, age, and nationality. Participants were asked to rate 43 different aspects of life abroad on a scale of one to seven. The rating process emphasized the respondents' personal satisfaction with these aspects and considered both emotional topics as well as more factual aspects with equal weight. The respondents' ratings of the individual factors were then bundled in various combinations for a total of 16 subcategories, and their mean values were used to draw up six topical indices: Quality of Life, Ease of Settling In, Working Abroad, Family Life, Personal Finance, and Cost of Living Index. Except for the latter, all indices were further averaged in order to rank 65 expatriate destinations around the world. In 2017 the top 10 were Bahrain, Costa Rica, Mexico, Taiwan, Portugal, New Zealand, Malta, Colombia, Singapore, and Spain.



For a country to be featured in the indices and consequently in the overall ranking, a sample size of at least 75 survey participants per country was necessary. The only exception to this is the Family Life Index, where a sample size of more than 40 respondents raising children abroad was required. In 2017, 65 and 45 countries respectively met these requirements. However, in most countries the sample size exceeded 100 participants.

### **About InterNations**

With 3 million members in 390 cities around the world, InterNations (<http://www.internations.org/>) is the largest global network and information site for people who live and work abroad. InterNations offers global and local networking both online and face-to-face. At around 6,000 monthly events and activities, expatriates have the opportunity to meet other global minds. Online services include country and city guides created by a team of professional writers, guest contributions about life abroad, and discussion forums to help members with topics such as the local job or housing search. InterNations membership is by approval only to ensure we remain a community of trust.

The InterNations app is available for Android and iOS and can be downloaded for free on [Google Play](#) and the [App Store](#).

Find more information about InterNations on our [press pages](#), [company website](#), [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#), or in our [Expatriate Magazine](#).

#### **Press Contact**

Vera Grossmann  
Media Spokesperson

InterNations GmbH  
Schwanthalerstrasse 39  
80336 Munich, Germany

Tel: +49 (0)89 461 3324 79  
Fax: +49 (0)89 461 3324 99  
Email: [press@internations.org](mailto:press@internations.org)  
Homepage: <http://www.internations.org/press>