

## Expat Insider 2021 Survey Reveals: The Best and Worst Destinations for Living and Working Abroad

For expats, Turkey is the worst destination for working abroad.

- Taiwan, Mexico, Costa Rica, Malaysia, Portugal, New Zealand, Australia, Ecuador, Canada, and Vietnam are the best destinations for expats in 2021.
- The worst countries for expats are Kuwait (59th), Italy, South Africa, Russia, Egypt, Japan, Cyprus, Turkey, India, and Malta (50th).
- Turkey comes 52nd out of 59 destinations in the Expat Insider 2021 survey. It ranks best in the Cost of Living Index (20th) but places last worldwide in the Working Abroad Index (59th).

Munich, 18 May 2021 — For the seventh time, [InterNations](https://www.internations.org), the world's largest expat community with around 4 million members, has published its *Expat Insider* survey. With more than 12,000 respondents, it is one of the most extensive surveys about living and working abroad, sharing insights into expat life in 59 destinations. The survey offers in-depth information on expats' satisfaction with the quality of life, ease of settling in, working life, personal finance, and the cost of living in their respective country of residence. Additionally, the respondents share **how they have been experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic** and how it has impacted their life.

Turkey comes 52nd out of 59 destinations in the *Expat Insider 2021* survey. Expats rank the country worst in the world for working abroad (59th) and 44th in the Personal Finance Index. While Turkey gets only average results in the Quality of Life (35th) and the Ease of Settling In (32nd) Indices, it performs fairly well in the Cost of Living Index (20th). Overall, Taiwan, Mexico, and Costa Rica are the best expat destinations worldwide: all of them attract expats with their ease of settling in and good personal finances. On the other hand, the bottom three countries, Kuwait, Italy, and South Africa, all perform poorly in the Working Abroad Index. Additionally, Kuwait is the hardest country for expats to feel at home in, Italy is the worst for personal finances, and expats in South Africa do not feel safe.



[www.internations.org/expat-insider](https://www.internations.org/expat-insider)

## Turkey in the *Expatriate Insider 2021* Survey

### At the Very Bottom for Working Hours

Overall, Turkey (52nd out of 59) lands among the bottom 10 destinations in the *Expatriate Insider 2021* survey. Ranking last worldwide in the Working Abroad Index (59th), Turkey also ends up in the bottom 10 for every single subcategory: Career Prospects & Satisfaction (56th), Economy & Job Security (58th), and Work & Leisure (59th). In fact, 32% of expats in Turkey are dissatisfied with their working hours — exactly twice the global average (16%). *“The job opportunities are bad because of the long working hours,”* says an Iraqi expat. Interestingly, expats with full-time jobs in Turkey work on average fewer hours per week than the global average (41.9 hours vs. 43.2 hours globally). However, the part-time employees work an average 28 hours per week, about four hours more than the global average (24.2 hours).

Less than half the expats in Turkey (49%) are satisfied with their work-life balance, compared to two-thirds globally (66%). What is more, 29% are dissatisfied with their job in general (vs. 16% globally), and 30% also rate their job security negatively (vs. 20% globally). A British expat shares that *“for expats, it is extremely difficult to get a work permit”*. The top 3 fields expats in Turkey work in are education (25% vs. 12% globally), manufacturing and engineering (9% vs. 7% globally), and healthcare (6% vs. 6% globally). Lastly, 43% of respondents rate the state of the local economy negatively — more than twice the global average (19%).

### A Friendly Population, despite the Language Barrier

Turkey places 32nd in the Ease of Settling In Index, with more than half the expats (53%) finding it easy to make local friends (vs. 44% globally). Most expats consider the local residents to be friendly towards foreign ones (72% vs. 67% globally), and they are happy with the general friendliness of the population too (72% vs. 69% globally). Actually, 24% of expats in Turkey have a social circle that consists mostly of locals (vs. 20% globally), and more than half (51%) say their group of personal friends and acquaintances is a mix of expats and locals (vs. 48% globally). *“I like the friendly locals and foreign people. There is a general warmth and hospitality among the people around me — much more so than in the country of my origin,”* shares a Russian expat. On the downside, 44% of expats find it difficult to live in Turkey without speaking the local language (vs. 29% globally). Still, 89% of expats speak it at least a little (vs. 87% globally).

### Expats Wish for a Better Digital Infrastructure and More Political Stability

Coming in 35th place in the Quality of Life Index, Turkey lands among the bottom 10 in the Digital Life subcategory (50th): 16% of expats find it difficult to get a local mobile phone number (vs. 7% globally), and 21% have trouble getting high-speed internet at home (vs. 12% globally). Moreover, 18% are unhappy with the unrestricted access to online services, such as social media (vs. 7% globally). The country also lands in the bottom 10 for political stability (54th), with more than a third of expats (35%) rating this factor negatively, compared to just 16% globally. *“I do not like the political life here,”* shares a Montenegrin expat. And a Canadian expat says: *“I have a problem with the uncertainty of the political direction.”*

### The Impact of COVID-19 on Expat Life in Turkey

Close to three in five expats living in Turkey (58%) say COVID-19 has not affected the period of time they are planning to stay in this country (vs. 63% globally). The areas where expats in Turkey find themselves most affected by the pandemic are their social life (25% vs. 24% globally) and personal travel (22% vs. 28% globally). Just over half the expats (54%) are satisfied with the

official information regarding COVID-19 and related regulations, though (vs. 66% globally). Out of the 18% who rated the communication negatively (vs. 17% globally), 61% say the information was unclear, confusing, and contradictory (vs. 67% globally). Another 39% are unhappy that it was only made available in the local language (vs. 20% globally).

## The Best and Worst Destinations for Living and Working Abroad in 2021

According to the *Expats Insider 2021* survey, the top 10 destinations for expats are Taiwan (1st), Mexico, Costa Rica, Malaysia, Portugal, New Zealand, Australia, Ecuador, Canada, and Vietnam (10th). All these countries stand out with above-average results in the Ease of Settling In Index, with Mexico ranking first, followed by Malaysia (2nd) and Costa Rica (3rd). Moreover, half of these countries also rank among the top 10 in the Personal Finance Index. Taiwan (11th) and Portugal (14th) narrowly miss out on a top 10 spot in this index, while New Zealand (28th), Australia (39th), and Canada (50th) have a weaker performance in this regard.

The worst countries for expats are Kuwait (59th), Italy, South Africa, Russia, Egypt, Japan, Cyprus, Turkey, India, and Malta (50th). Besides Japan (21st), all these countries rank far below the global average in the Quality of Life Index. What is more, eight out of the ten worst-rated destinations are also among the bottom 10 in the Working Abroad Index — the only two exceptions being India (46th) and Malta (31st), which, however, also receive mediocre results at best. Lastly, India is the only country in the overall bottom 10 that performs very well in the Personal Finance Index (4th), while the others — such as Italy (59th), Kuwait (58th), and Cyprus (57th) — rank below the global average or even land among the bottom 10.

## Expats Life during the COVID-19 Pandemic

On a global scale, 45% of survey respondents say that COVID-19 had an impact on their current stay abroad or their relocation plans: the **share of expats** who say so (**37%**) either decided to *not* move back home in the near future (18%), planned to move to another country but had to change these plans (8%), will move to another country due to the pandemic (6%), or will move back home sooner than originally planned (5%).

The **share of local respondents whose relocation plans were affected by COVID-19 (61%)** is a lot higher: some of them were living abroad but moved home sooner than planned (18%), others were planning to move abroad but had to change their plans (35%), and about one in ten have now decided to move abroad because of the pandemic (9%).

### The Pandemic's Impact on Everyday Life

Of course, COVID-19 has not only disrupted the relocation plans of expats worldwide. When asked where they see the biggest impact of the pandemic on their personal life *right now*, the survey respondents point out its effects on personal travel (25%), social life (23%), and their work or business (16%) in particular. In the *long run*, respondents are still concerned about the impact of COVID-19 on their social life (17% of all respondents), and there are also considerable worries regarding personal travel (22%).

### How Expats Stay Informed on COVID-19

Expats across the world mostly rely on official government channels (48%), local news (47%), and social media (40%) for news on the COVID-19 situation and the related regulations in their country of residence. Considering the importance of government channels, just **how satisfied are expats with the official communication regarding COVID-19 and related regulations?** Worldwide, not quite two-thirds (66%) rate this factor positively, with close to a quarter (24%) saying they are completely satisfied. The main complaint among expats who are *not* satisfied with the official communication on the pandemic is that the information is unclear, confusing, and/or contradictory (67%).

**For further information on the global impact of COVID-19 on expat life, please take a look at the full press release in the download center of our e-mail.**

### About the InterNations *Expat Insider 2021* Survey

For its annual [Expat Insider survey](#), InterNations asked 12,420 expats representing 174 nationalities and living in 186 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 up to 37 different aspects of life abroad on a scale of one to seven. The rating process emphasized the respondents' personal satisfaction with these aspects, considering both emotional topics and more factual aspects with equal weight. The respondents' ratings of the individual factors were then bundled in various combinations for a total of 13 subcategories, and their mean values were used to draw up five topical indices: Quality of Life, Ease of Settling In, Working Abroad, Personal Finance, and Cost of Living. The first four of these indices were further averaged together with expats' general satisfaction with their life in order to rank 59 expat destinations around the world. In 2021, the top 10 are Taiwan, Mexico, Costa Rica, Malaysia, Portugal, New Zealand, Australia, Ecuador, Canada, and Vietnam. Moreover, expats were asked about how COVID-19 has impacted their life abroad; however, these responses did not influence the overall ranking.

For a country to be featured in the indices and consequently in the overall ranking, a sample size of at least 50 survey participants per destination was necessary.

### About InterNations

With around 4 million members in 420 cities around the world, [InterNations](#) is the largest global community and a source of information for people who live and work abroad. InterNations offers global and local networking and socializing, both online and face to face. At around 6,000 events and activities per month, expatriates have the opportunity to meet other global minds. Online services include discussion forums and helpful articles with personal expat experiences, tips, and information about life abroad. Membership is by approval only to ensure we remain a community of trust. InterNations is part of the New Work SE, a group of brands that offer products and services for a better working life.

Find more information about InterNations on our [press page](#), [in our company blog](#), or in our [magazine](#).

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