

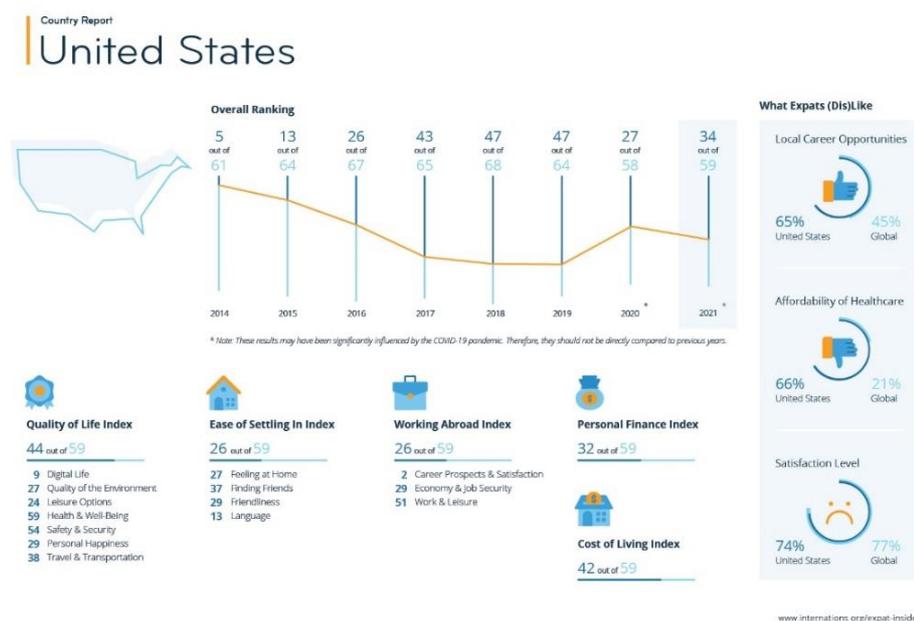
## Expatriate Insider 2021 Survey Reveals: The Best and Worst Destinations for Living and Working Abroad

Expats in the United States have amazing career opportunities but struggle with the healthcare system.

- 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).
- The United States comes 34th out of 59 destinations in the Expatriate Insider 2021 survey. It performs best in the Ease of Settling In and the Working Abroad Indices (26th for both) and worst for the quality of life (44th).

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 *Expatriate 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.

The United States comes 34th out of 59 destinations in the *Expatriate Insider 2021* survey. The country performs worst for its quality of life (44th) and does only slightly better in the Cost of Living Index (42nd). While it ranks 32nd in the Personal Finance Index, it performs best in the Ease of Settling In and Working Abroad Indices (26th for both). 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.



## The United States in the *Expat Insider 2021* Survey

### Good Career Opportunities and Easy to Find Local Friends

Coming in 34th place out of 59 destinations in the *Expat Insider 2021* survey, the United States performs best in the Ease of Settling In and Working Abroad Indices (26th for both). In fact, 65% of expats are happy with the local career opportunities, compared to just 45% globally — placing the country second worldwide not only for this factor, but also in the Career Prospects & Satisfaction subcategory, just behind Ireland (1st). Additionally, 71% of expats are overall satisfied with their job (vs. 68% globally), and 68% rate the state of the local economy positively (vs. 62% globally). On the other hand, a quarter of expats (25%) are dissatisfied with their job security (vs. 20% globally), and 29% are unhappy with the work-life balance (vs. 17% globally). Similarly, 23% of expats rate their working hours negatively (vs. 16% globally), even though working expats in a full-time position in the USA work only slightly more than the global average at 44 hours a week (vs. 43.2 hours worldwide).

In terms of settling in, the USA lands in 27th place in the Feeling at Home subcategory, with 71% of expats finding it is easy to get used to the local culture (vs. 65% globally). What is more, 66% find it easy to settle down in the USA (vs. 62% globally), and 70% consider the locals generally friendly towards foreign residents (vs. 67% globally). Additionally, 72% of expats are satisfied with the general friendliness of the population (vs. 69% globally). A Taiwanese expat in the USA points out *“the career opportunities and the easiness to settle in”* as highlights of life abroad in the USA.

While 37% of expats find it difficult to make new friends in the United States (vs. 32% globally), 47% at least consider it easy to make friends with the locals (vs. 44% globally). In fact, more than half the expats in the USA (53%) describe their friends and acquaintances as a fairly mixed group of expats and locals (vs. 48% globally), and more than a quarter (26%) are mostly friends with locals (vs. 20% globally). Just 21% mostly socialize with other expats (vs. 32% globally).

### Excellent Digital Life but Horrible Healthcare System

The USA performs worst in the Quality of Life Index (44th), coming in last place worldwide in the Health and Well-Being subcategory (59th). Only 20% of expats are satisfied with the affordability of healthcare, which is less than a third of the global average (61%). And 19% of expats rate the quality of medical care negatively (vs. 14% globally). *“The healthcare is expensive, and we are overcharged for almost anything,”* shares a Belgian expat. It adds to the low quality of life that just over half of expats (56%) find living in the USA peaceful, compared to 80% globally. Another 37% rate the political stability within the country negatively (vs. 16% globally), and 15% do not feel safe in the USA (vs. 8% globally).

On the upside, the USA ranks ninth in the Digital Life subcategory, with the majority of expats finding it easy to get high-speed internet access at home (90% vs. 79% globally) as well as to pay without cash (95% vs. 83% globally). Furthermore, 92% of expats are satisfied with the unrestricted access to online services (vs. 84% globally). With a seventh place, the USA also ranks in the top 10 for the local leisure options, with 80% of expats satisfied with this factor (vs. 72% globally).

### The Impact of COVID-19 on Expat Life in the USA

While the pandemic has changed the relocation plans of 37% of survey respondents on a global scale, it has had an impact on 31% of those in the USA. Next to its effect on expat stays, the pandemic has mostly impacted expats in the USA in terms of their personal travel (28% vs. 28% globally), social life (27% vs. 24% globally), and their work or business (15% vs. 15% globally). Few have

noticed an impact on their (or their children's) education (1% vs. 2% globally), general health (2% vs. 2% globally), or business travel (5% vs. 6% globally).

More than half the expats in USA (57%) use local news as source of information on COVID-19 and related regulations, which is ten percentage points more than the global average (47%), followed by official government channels (50% vs. 48% globally). A lower-than-average share (35%) stays up to date through social media (vs. 40% globally). However, just half the respondents in the USA (50%) are satisfied with the official communication regarding COVID-19, which is 16 percentage points below the global average (vs. 66% globally).

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

According to the *Expatriate 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.

## Expatriate 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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