

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

Expats in Colombia enjoy the affordable lifestyle and feel at home 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).
- Colombia comes 11th out of 59 destinations in the Expats Insider 2021 survey. It ranks best in the Personal Finance Index (3rd) and worst in Working Abroad Index (38th).

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 *Expats 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.

Colombia comes 11th out of 59 destinations in the *Expats Insider 2021* survey. It makes it into the top 10 for the Personal Finance (3rd), Ease of Settling In (4th), and Cost of Living (5th) Indices. While it also achieves a solid 25th rank in the Quality of Life Index, it only comes in 38th place for working abroad. 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.



Colombia in the *Expat Insider 2021* Survey

Great for Making Friends — And for the Budget

Coming 11th out of 59 countries in the *Expat Insider 2021* survey, Colombia lands in the top 5 of the Ease of Settling In Index (4th): 75% of expats feel at home in the local culture (vs. 63% globally), and 70% find it easy to make local friends (vs. 44% globally). Interestingly, 46% of expats in Colombia have mostly local friends and acquaintances, which is 26 percentage points more than the global average (20%). Close to two-thirds (65%) also agree that finding new friends in general is easy in Colombia, whereas globally only 48% of expats feel this way. When asked what they like most about Colombia, a British expat says *“the friendliness of the people, who genuinely care about me, and the low cost of living”*.

In fact, 81% of respondents rate the cost of living in Colombia positively, compared to just 48% globally. This results in a 5th place out of 59 in the Cost of Living Index. Colombia even ranks higher in the Personal Finance Index (3rd), where only Vietnam (1st) and Mexico (2nd) perform better. Most expats (84%) say their disposable household income is enough or more than enough to cover their expenses (vs. 77% globally). What is more, 76% are satisfied with their financial situation (vs. 64% globally) — 40% even very much so (vs. 23% globally).

Personal Happiness despite Lack of Personal Safety

Colombia places 25th in the Quality of Life Index, with especially good results for personal happiness (5th). The majority of expats (86%) is happy with their life in general (vs. 75% globally), and nearly all of those with a partner or spouse (98%) are happy with their relationship (vs. 87% globally). Actually, more than three in five expats in Colombia who are in a relationship (61%) are romantically involved with a local resident, which is a lot more than the global average (38%). For the majority of expats (97%), Colombia's natural environment is also a highlight (vs. 84% globally). A US American expat shares: *“Colombia is a beautiful country with great natural resources, a remarkable history, and many places to discover.”*

However, with close to one in four expats (23%) rating their personal safety negatively (vs. 8% globally), Colombia lands in the bottom 10 of the Safety & Security subcategory (50th). Another 19% also rate the country's peacefulness negatively, ten percentage points more than the global average (9%). And less than half the expats (49%) are happy with the political stability in Colombia (vs. 64% globally).

Below-Average Career Prospects

While Colombia performs very well in the overall ranking, its other weak spot is the Working Abroad Index (38th). The country ranks 41st in the Career Prospects & Satisfaction subcategory, with just 31% of expats rating the local career opportunities positively (vs. 45% globally) and one in five (20%) being dissatisfied with their job (vs. 16% globally). Moreover, 22% of expats rate the state of the local economy negatively, which is slightly above the global average (19%). A Danish expat explains that *“too many people are struggling to make a living”*. On the upside, 69% of respondents are happy with their work-life balance (vs. 66% globally).

The Impact of COVID-19 on Expat Life in Colombia

In one way or another, the pandemic has changed the relocation plans of 37% of expats globally — this is also the case for 40% of expats in Colombia. In fact, 23% have decided to stay in Colombia due to COVID-19 (vs. 18% globally). The top 3 sources of information for expats in Colombia are local news (46% vs. 47% globally), official government channels (43% vs. 48% globally), and social media (39% vs.

40% globally). Additionally, 36% rely on international media and expat news, slightly more than the global average (32%). More than seven in ten expats in Colombia (71%) are satisfied with the official communication regarding COVID-19 and related regulations, compared to just two-thirds globally (66%).

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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