

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

Expats in Denmark enjoy a great quality of life, but it comes at a considerable cost.

- 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).
- Denmark comes 37th out of 59 destinations in the Expat Insider 2021 survey. It ranks in the top 10 for its quality of life (10th) and working abroad (5th), but in the bottom 10 for the cost of living (52nd) and the ease of settling in (57th).

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.

Denmark comes 37th out of 59 destinations in the *Expat Insider 2021* survey. The country receives very mixed results: It ranks in the top 10 of the Working Abroad (5th) and Quality of Life (10th) Indices but ends up among the worst in the world in the Cost of Living (52nd) and Ease of Settling In (57th) Indices. 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.



Denmark in the *Expat Insider 2021* Survey

Peaceful, Safe, and Digitized

Denmark lands in a below-average 37th place out of 59 in the *Expat Insider 2021* survey. One of its strongest points is the quality of life (10th). It ranks among the top 10 in three subcategories of the Quality of Life Index, coming 3rd out of 59 for digital life, 4th for safety and security, and 8th for health and well-being. Expats consider it the best destination for cashless payment options, with 97% rating this factor positively (vs. 83% globally). They also describe Denmark as peaceful (95% vs. 80% globally) and safe (95% vs. 84% globally). *"I love the security and peace and quiet here,"* says a US expat. While respondents appreciate the air quality (88% positive replies vs. 66% globally), they are less happy with the natural environment: only 76% give it a positive rating (vs. 84% globally). Opinions on healthcare are also divided: though 85% consider it affordable (vs. 61% globally) — 63% even very much so (vs. 30% globally) — 78% are happy with its quality (vs. 71% globally).

Generous Incomes, Great Work-Life Balance, Average Job Satisfaction

Denmark does surprisingly well in the Personal Finance Index (16th). About two in three expats (64%) are satisfied with their financial situation (vs. 64% globally), and 59% state that their disposable household income is *more* than enough to cover expenses (vs. 52% globally). This is surprising insofar as Denmark performs poorly in the Cost of Living Index (52nd): 58% are unhappy with the local cost of living (vs. 34% globally), but maybe their income is generous enough to make up for it. In fact, 38% of expats in Denmark have a gross yearly income of 100,000 USD or more (vs. 20% globally).

Denmark receives its best result in the Working Abroad Index (5th). It places first in the Work & Leisure subcategory for the fourth time in five years. Expats love their *hygge* and their work-life balance (80% positive replies vs. 66% globally). A further 87% rate the local economy positively (vs. 62% globally). Nevertheless, only 60% are happy with their job security (vs. 61% globally) while 65% are satisfied with their job in general (vs. 68% globally).

A Closed Culture with a Challenging Language?

It is the Ease of Settling In Index (57th) that drags Denmark's overall ranking down. It ends up in the bottom 10 for feeling at home (55th), friendliness (57th), and finding friends (58th). Denmark is the worst-rated destination for making local friends: 66% of expats find it difficult, compared to an average of 36%. Another 40% consider the Danish unfriendly towards foreign residents (vs. 18% globally), and 38% do not feel at home in the local culture (vs. 20% globally). Expats also struggle with learning the language (76% vs. 42% globally). In fact, 25% do not speak Danish at all (vs. 13% globally). *"I dislike the very closed culture and the very difficult language. Danish society is not open to foreigners at all,"* says an expat from Spain.

The Impact of COVID-19 on Expat Life in Denmark

Seven out of ten expats in Denmark say that their relocation plans have not been disrupted by COVID-19 (vs. 63% globally). It is mostly their personal travels that have been affected (35% vs. 28% globally). Respondents also seem very satisfied with the official communication regarding the pandemic and the related regulations: 81% give it a positive rating (vs. 66% globally). They like that the information is easy to understand (66%), easy to find (54%), and available in several languages (35%).

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.

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.

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