

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

Expats in Egypt struggle with a low quality of life and their working conditions.

- 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).
- Egypt comes 55th out of 59 destinations in the Expatriate Insider 2021 survey. It ranks in the bottom 10 for almost all indices, except the Cost of Living (19th) and Ease of Settling In (30th).

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.

Egypt comes 55th out of 59 destinations in the *Expatriate Insider 2021* survey. The country ranks in the bottom 5 worldwide for its quality of life (57th) and working abroad (53rd). While it only lands in a poor 49th rank in the Personal Finance Index as well, it comes 19th for the cost of living. 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.



Egypt in the *Expat Insider 2021* Survey

The Worst Destination for Digital Life

Egypt (55th out of 59) lands in the bottom 10 of the *Expat Insider 2021* survey. The country performs worst in the Quality of Life Index (57th), where only India (58th) and Kuwait (59th) do worse. In fact, 39% of expats in Egypt rate the water and sanitation infrastructure negatively (vs. 12% globally), and 24% are unhappy with the natural environment (vs. 8% globally). Furthermore, close to half the expats (48%) rate the air quality negatively — more than twice the global average (20%). *“The air quality is bad, and there are only few green spaces,”* shares an Afghan expat. The country also ranks among the bottom 10 in the Personal Happiness subcategory (55th). Fewer than seven out of ten expats in Egypt (69%) are happy with their life in general (vs. 75% globally).

Landing at the very bottom, Egypt performs even worse in the Digital Life subcategory (59th). Exactly three in five expats (60%) rate the availability of government services online negatively — nearly three times the global average (21%). Moreover, about one out of three expats find it difficult to get high-speed internet access at home (34% vs. 12% globally) and to pay without cash (32% vs. 9% globally).

Poor Career Prospects and Low Income

Also landing in the bottom 10 of the Working Abroad Index (53rd), Egypt receives extremely poor results in the Career Prospects & Satisfaction (55th) and Economy & Job Security (53rd) subcategories. A quarter of expats (25%) are dissatisfied with their job in general (vs. 16% globally), and 46% rate the local career opportunities negatively (vs. 33% globally). In Egypt, 38% of expats work in the field of education, which is a very large share compared to the global average of 12%. Only half the expats (50%) are satisfied with their job security in Egypt (vs. 61% globally), and just 35% rate the state of the local economy positively (vs. 62% globally).

Coming in place 49th in the Personal Finance Index, Egypt performs poorly in terms of the disposable household income (53rd). Close to a third of expats (31%) say their household income is not enough to cover their expenses (vs. 23% globally) — 15% even state that it is not even nearly enough (vs. 8% globally). What is more, just 59% of expats are satisfied with their financial situation, compared to 64% globally. The majority of expats in Egypt (59%) does have an annual income of less than 25,000 USD (vs. 30% globally). *“I make 500 USD a month doing a professional technical job,”* shares an Indian expat.

The Only Upsides: Cost of Living and Finding Friends

Despite the low incomes, the country performs quite well in the Cost of Living Index (19th): 61% of expats rate this aspect positively, compared to just 48% globally. Egypt also does not do too badly in the Ease of Settling In Index (30th). It receives relatively good results in the Finding Friends subcategory (18th), with 57% of expats finding it easy to make local friends (vs. 44% globally). Another 56% say finding new friends is generally easy (vs. 48% globally). Most expats in Egypt (65%) have friends and acquaintances that are a fairly mixed group of local residents and other expats (vs. 48% globally).

The Impact of COVID-19 on Expat Life in Egypt

The pandemic has affected the relocation plans of more than half the expats in Egypt (53%) — a larger share than the global average (37%). While globally just 6% have decided to move to another country because of COVID-19, this is the case for 15% of survey respondents in Egypt. Another 16% were already planning to move to another country, but they had to change their plans due to the COVID-19 pandemic (vs. 8% globally), and 9% will be returning home sooner than originally planned

(vs. 5% globally). Nearly two in five expats in Egypt (39%) rely on expat news and international media for news on COVID-19 (vs. 32% globally), while only a quarter (25%) follows the local news (vs. 47% globally). Just 38% of expats in Egypt are satisfied with the official communication regarding COVID-19 and related regulations (vs. 66% 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.

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