

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

Expats feel at home in Greece but struggle with the job market.

- 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).
- Greece places 40th out of 59 destinations in the Expat Insider 2021 survey. It ranks best in the Cost of Living Index (14th) and worst in the Working Abroad Index (55th).

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.

Greece comes 40th out of 59 destinations in the *Expat Insider 2021* survey. The country performs especially poorly in the Working Abroad (55th) and the Personal Finance (52nd) Indices. While it lands in a rather mediocre 29th place in the Quality of Life Index, it makes it into the top 20 worldwide for the ease of settling in (19th) and the cost of living (14th). 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

Greece in the *Expat Insider 2021* Survey

In the Bottom 10 for Working Abroad

Overall, Greece ranks 40th out of 59 countries in the *Expat Insider 2021* survey. It performs worst in the Working Abroad Index (55th), though: 43% of expats rate the state of the local economy negatively — more than twice the global share (19%). Moreover, 65% are unhappy with the local career opportunities (vs. 33% globally), and 32% are dissatisfied with their job security (vs. 20% globally). An expat from France explains that *“there is a lack of job opportunities”*.

At least, 68% of expats are satisfied with their working hours, which is just above the global average (66%), and 69% say the same about their work-life balance (vs. 66% globally). On average, expats with a full-time position in Greece work 42 hours a week (vs. 43.2 hours globally). The most popular fields that expats in Greece work in are education (28% vs. 12% globally), commerce and trade (6% vs. 3% globally), and IT (6% vs. 11% globally), as well as leisure, sports, and tourism (6% vs. 2% globally).

A Place to Call Home, despite Low Incomes

Greece does better than the global average in the Ease of Settling In Index (19th): 90% of expats find the Greek population generally friendly, 21 percentage points more than the global share (69%). Additionally, 80% of expats describe the local people as friendly towards foreign residents (vs. 67% globally), and 63% find it easy to make local friends (vs. 44% globally). Moreover, 59% say it is generally easy to make new friends in Greece (vs. 48% globally). In fact, one in three expats (33%) says their friends and acquaintances are mostly locals (vs. 20% globally), while another 50% describe them as a mix of locals and expats (vs. 48% globally). Most expats also find it easy to get used to (79% vs. 65% globally) and to feel at home in the local culture (81% vs. 63% globally).

The country also receives good results in the Cost of Living Index (14th): 59% of expats are happy with the local cost of living (vs. 48% globally). However, Greece ends up among the bottom 10 in the Personal Finance Index (52nd): 31% of expats are dissatisfied with their disposable household income (vs. 23% globally). Actually, close to three in five expats in Greece (59%) have a gross yearly income of 25,000 USD or less (vs. 30% globally) — 32% even have one of less than 12,000 USD per year (vs. 15% globally). *“The financial instability and the low income are my biggest problems here,”* shares a Russian expat.

The Number One for Climate and Weather

While Greece has a fairly average performance in the Quality of Life Index overall (29th), it receives excellent results in the Leisure Options subcategory (3rd) — only beaten by Spain (1st) and Mexico (2nd). In fact, 84% of expats rate the local leisure options positively (vs. 72% globally), and 76% are happy with their socializing and leisure activities (vs. 67% globally). Moreover, 94% of expats rate the climate and weather positively (vs. 66% globally) — and 68% could not be any happier with this factor (vs. 27% globally). These results make Greece the worldwide number one for climate and weather. *“I am spending a lot of time outside due to the great weather,”* says a British expat.

The Impact of COVID-19 on Expat Life in Greece

The majority of expats in Greece (70%) is satisfied with the official communication regarding COVID-19 and related regulations (vs. 66% globally) — 32% even very much so (vs. 24% globally). Most of

these expats (68%) find the information clear and easy to understand (vs. 60% globally). For expats in Greece, the top 3 sources of information regarding COVID-19 are social media (48% vs. 40% globally), the local news (47% vs. 47% globally), and official government channels (44% vs. 48% 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.

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